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Harkey, Simeon W. 1811-1889.

The church's best state, or,
Constant revivals of

THE
CHURCH'S BEST STATE;
OR
CONSTANT REVIVALS OF RELIGION.

BY
REV. SIMEON W. HARKEY,
Frederick, Md.

“O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of
the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.”—Hab. iii. 2.

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P R E F A C E.

THE idea of a *constant revival*, and the design of the following work, were suggested to the author's mind a few years ago, by reading a letter from the pen of Rev. Dr. Alexander, published in a work entitled "Sprague's Lectures on Revivals." He was subsequently appointed to preach a sermon before the Ecclesiastical Body of which he is a member, on revivals, which led him to a thorough examination of the whole subject, and produced the firm conviction in his mind, that constant revivals of religion are possible, and that it is the sacred duty of all true Christians to labor and pray that they may be enjoyed; and that this would unquestionably be *The Church's Best State*. A constant revival state in a congregation is certainly vastly preferable to temporary excitements, however deep and beneficial in their results; and if its attainment is possible, ought not every congregation to enjoy it? It is to awaken attention on this subject, and contribute a feeble mite to the attainment of so desirable an end, that this little work is now presented to the public. The author's object is to *do good*, and if his labors aid, even in a small degree, to promote genuine revivals and the salvation of souls, he will feel himself abundantly compensated. He has not hesitated to use any suitable materials that he met with; yet the principal part of the

work is the result of his own experience. He hopes that no one will be able to call him either a sectarian or a bigot from any thing found within these pages, and that these teachings are in perfect accordance with the Scriptures of Divine Truth. May our Divine Redeemer own and bless this humble but sincere effort to promote his kingdom upon earth! To Him, and to all true friends of genuine revivals, the work is devoutly and affectionately dedicated by

THE AUTHOR.

Frederick, Md., March 28th, 1842.

INTRODUCTION.

THE grand and glorious design of the Christian Church upon earth, is the salvation of a lost world, by the regeneration and sanctification of immortal souls. This fundamental truth is so obvious, and so generally admitted in *theory*, that it might seem unnecessary to state, much less to defend it, did not the *practice* of so many professed christians contradict their profession in this particular. But while we see those into whose hands the Lord has committed, instrumentally, the work of the world's conversion, contending more for forms and ceremonies, than striving to promote the life and power of true godliness; more zealous in defending their creeds and confessions of faith, than in preaching "Christ and him crucified;" more anxious to make proselytes, than to gather souls into the fold of the Redeemer; more concerned about the magnificence and splendor of their churches, and the pomp and display of their worship, than the state of vital piety among the members of their congregations;—while we see these things, it becomes our duty to go back to "the first principles of christianity," and endeavor to recall the attention of men to the original design of our holy religion. Nay more; while we see so many acknowledged and ruling members in the churches, who are entirely destitute and ignorant of *experimental* religion; who have "a name to live, but are dead;" "have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof;" who instead of being "the light of the world, and the salt of the earth," are a dead weight, an incubus upon the vital

energies of the church, the faithful watchman upon Zion's walls dare not hold his peace. The grand design of the church is forgotten, souls are in danger, and the world is perishing: he must therefore sound the alarm, and obey God, who bids him, "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins." —Is. lviii. 1.

But what is the grand design of the church? What great object had the Lord in view in her establishment upon earth? Have we stated it correctly when we said that it is *the salvation of a lost world by the regeneration and sanctification of souls*? That this is her most sublime and glorious design, and should be constantly, singly, and most ardently pursued by her, is evident, in the first place, from *the nature of the case*.

The world has apostatized from God, and must be reclaimed or perish. All men are by nature fallen, polluted, guilty sinners, and must be regenerated and sanctified, or be eternally lost. But the church possesses the only means by which this can be accomplished. Hers is the only plan of salvation which the God of infinite love and wisdom has devised; hence it follows incontrovertibly, that her great business is the regeneration and sanctification of souls, and that just so far as she fails of this object, she falls short of her duty, and thwarts the benevolent and merciful design of her Founder. The christian church is "the light of the world;" but let her light be obscured and her glory tarnished by the substitution of shadows for substance, and ceremonies and forms for the life and power of vital piety, and her object is not accomplished, the sun is at once blotted from the moral firmament of the world, and "darkness again

covers the earth, and gross darkness the people;" the world is left in its ruins. The church is "the salt of the earth," but if this "salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted?"—mankind will then be left to rot in their own corruption. The church is the world's only star of hope, but if this star be quenched or its glory concealed, the dark curtain of despair will at once enshroud our wretched guilty race. How important then that christians should ever keep the real design of the church prominently and vividly before their minds, and labor unceasingly for its accomplishment. But that the conversion and sanctification of souls is the grand design of the church is further evident from the fact, that this is *indispensable to the salvation of men*. No souls can be saved, unless they are regenerated and sanctified. Of this the Savior and his apostles do most positively and solemnly assure us. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee," said Jesus to Nicodemus, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John iii. 3. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Heb. xii. 14. "Be ye holy for I am holy saith the Lord." 1 Pet. i. 16. If therefore, the church as the instrument in the hands of God, does not labor for and effect the regeneration and sanctification of souls, what good does she accomplish for the spiritual interests of men? None at all. She might as well have had no existence. The Savior has said, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Mat. xvi. 26. And so we may ask most emphatically, what advantage will it be to us in a future world to have been members of the church here, if our souls are not saved? It will only add to our misery then to have to say, "Lord, Lord,

have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have done many wonderful works?" if after all we must hear the dreadful sentence, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Mat. vii. 22—23. It will be of no avail to us then, to have been professors of religion; to have worn the badge of discipleship; to have had fine churches, eloquent preachers, flourishing congregations, and every thing belonging to the exterior, beautiful and good; if our souls are not saved, because not regenerated and sanctified. Is it not then, ought it not to be the object and aim of the church, instrumentally, to convert, purify, and fit precious souls for heaven? The same important truth becomes still more evident, when we remember, that the gospel scheme is *adapted*, with infinite wisdom to produce this great end. All the institutions and ordinances of the church, not only declare her design, but are also means of grace used by the Holy Spirit for its accomplishment.

What, for example, is the design and legitimate tendency of *the ministry of reconciliation*? Let the apostle Paul answer: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." 2 Cor. v. 20. To bring sinners to the Savior is, therefore, the great business of the ministry. For the conversion and sanctification of souls the faithful pastor labors and prays, preaches and toils, by night and day, in season and out of season. This is his great work to which all his efforts must tend. So the Master has taught by precept and example. When he sent John the Baptist, as his forerunner to prepare the way for his coming, he gave him this text to preach from, "*Repent* ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" and John preached "the baptism

of *repentance*," calling upon his Jewish brethren "to flee from the wrath to come," to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance : And think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father : for I say unto you, God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Mat. iii. 2, 8, 9. As though he had said, no Jewish extraction or privileges, or piety of ancestors will justify you in the sight of God, or save your souls ; nothing will accomplish this but repentance towards God and faith in the coming Messiah ; nothing but a total change of heart and mind.

When Christ himself commenced his public ministry, he took the same text, and called upon all that heard him saying, "*Repent* ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," and positively assured all, "Except ye *repent* ye shall all likewise perish." Mat. iv. 17, Luke xiii. 3.

When the apostles were sent forth, they were commanded to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature ;" assured that "He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned !" They consequently went abroad and preached every where, "That men should *repent*." Hence we hear a Peter on the day of Pentecost, full of the Holy Ghost and heavenly fire, addressing the thousands, who enquired, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" and saying to them, "*Repent* and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins : and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Acts ii. 37, 38. And what was the result ? The conversion of three thousand in one day ! Does this not prove the design of the church to be the regeneration and sanctification of souls ? Hence also we hear a Paul standing up before the philosophers and wise men

of Athens, exclaim, "The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to REPENT." Acts xvii. 30. The apostles evidently understood that the grand design of their preaching and labors, and of the church which they were to establish, was the conversion of sinners and the sanctification of souls.

But again; what is the design and tendency of *the sacraments of the church*? Do they not also prove the object of the church to be as stated? What does baptism teach? Evidently, and in the most forcible manner too, that men are sinners, vile, polluted, and guilty, and therefore need to be regenerated, washed, sanctified, before they can be acceptable members of Christ's church upon earth, or fit to dwell with him in heaven. Does it not show that as water cleanses the body from all natural pollution, so the religion of the Savior, with its blood of atonement, and Spirit of all grace, is perfectly adapted to cleanse and purify our souls?—And what is the design and tendency of the Lord's Supper, that other sacrament of the New Testament church, which is to be so frequently and solemnly celebrated by christians? Does it not constantly, prominently, and vividly present the great cardinal feature of the christian scheme, *the atonement by the blood of Christ*, and the indispensable necessity of being sanctified by that blood? Does it not always present a Savior crucified, and tell us in a manner much more powerful and affecting than it is possible for language to express it, "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Is. liii. 5. The whole atonement is based upon the fact, that man is a sinner, and that he therefore must be regenerated and sanctified.

Thus the institutions and sacraments of the church both teach her design and are means for its accomplishment. Who; after all this, can doubt that the grand design of the church is, the salvation of a lost world by the regeneration and sanctification of souls? To this irresistible conclusion, might be added a number of express declarations of the sacred scriptures. When the Savior's conception and birth were made known to Joseph, the espoused husband of Mary, he was instructed "to call his name JESUS; because he should save his people from their sins." Mat. i. 21. Hence the great work which our Lord came to do, was to "save his people from their sins." For this he came, lived, taught, labored, prayed, suffered and died. For this he arose from the dead, ascended to heaven, and intercedes at the right hand of God the Father. And for this he established his church, and instituted all the ordinances of religion and the means of grace. But he cannot save men from their sins without regenerating and sanctifying their souls; hence this is the grand design of his mediatorial kingdom. Hence he himself declares, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke xix. 10. Many other passages might be quoted, but it is unnecessary; the argument is complete and unanswerable. The design of the church is correctly stated in the first sentence of this introduction.

We have dwelt somewhat upon this point in our Introduction, because we are about to deduce several very important *inferences* from it, and also because it forms the grand foundation of our little work. Upon it we build our whole superstructure; and hence we wished to define and settle our position clearly, and lay a solid and immoveable basis.

The inferences which we deduce from the preceding argument are the following:—

First. If the regeneration and sanctification of souls is the grand design of the church, then it follows, that just so far as she fails to accomplish this design, she falls short of her duty, disappoints the expectations of her Founder, and is guilty of the blood of souls in the sight of God. Consequently all those men, ministers and members of the church, who do not employ all the efforts and use every means which God has given them for the conversion of sinners, do, to the same extent, overlook and really defeat the great object for which the Savior established his church upon earth. They are standing in the way of the kingdom of God; neither entering in themselves nor permitting others to do so, who would. What a fearful account of their stewardship will all such have to render at the great day of the Lord! Again; if the conversion and sanctification of souls is the grand design of the church, then *that is clearly her best state in which the greatest number of souls is regenerated*. It is not therefore when she enjoys most peace, possesses most wealth, has the greatest number of learned and popular preachers, the most splendid and costly church edifices, or is externally in the most flourishing condition, that she is necessarily in her best state. No. She may then be in her very worst condition. She may possess all this and not be instrumental in the conversion of souls, and the filling up of heaven with blessed inhabitants.

Finally. If the grand business of the church is the regeneration and sanctification of souls, then it follows that *those measures*, agreeing with the spirit and precepts of the gospel, which God approves and blesses to the conversion and sanctification of the greatest number

of precious souls, *are the best*. The most important measures to be employed, God has prescribed; and these dare not be neglected or crowded out by others of human invention. Such are the preaching of the word, the proper administration of the sacraments, and prayer. But in many things relating to external modes and measures God has given us no specific directions, and consequently left us to be guided by the spirit of the gospel, in connection with sound reason and experience. In such cases those means or measures are the best which do the most good; which God blesses to the conversion and sanctification of the greatest number of souls. The dispute about *old* and *new measures* among christians and brethren is therefore great folly. In all essential matters God has decided the measures to be used by prescribing them; and in non-essentials we should have charity for each other, and all employ those means which God blesses most; and which accomplish the most good among the people for whom we labor, and in the circumstances in which we are placed.

THE CHURCH'S BEST STATE.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT IS TRUE RELIGION?

No question can be of greater practical importance than this, *what is true godliness, and do we really possess it?* At the same time it seems necessary that we should answer it before we proceed to the more general one, *what is a genuine revival of religion, and is this the church's best state?* Because if we have a correct idea of true religion or piety, we shall have no difficulty in understanding and appreciating what is meant by a *revival* of it. Our blessed Savior has given us the best definition of true religion, doubtless, that can be given. He said to a certain lawyer, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."¹ This is true religion; its very essence and life; and may be summed up in one word, LOVE: supreme love to God, and subordinate love to our fel-

¹Mat. xxii. 37—40.

low-men. This is the religion, not only of all truly pious men in this world, but of all holy and intelligent beings throughout the entire universe. The very essence of that piety, which glows so intensely in the bosoms of seraphs, is *love* to their Maker and to each other. Love constitutes heaven; its absence is hell. Without it there can be no happiness in any part of God's universe; with it in all its fullness and perfection, there can be no misery. No wonder therefore that the Master has said, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets!" That is, this is the sum and substance of the religion of the Bible. It follows then, that all true christians and the angels of heaven have the *same* religion; except that in the case of the former it is modified to suit their fallen condition. And yet some men affect to deny the truth and divinity of the christian religion! They might as well deny the existence of the sun shining in his noon-day splendor! The religion of the Bible, which is love to God and man, *must* be true, even if no rational account of its origin and promulgation in the world could be given. If that blessed book, which declares that the sum and substance of the system which it teaches, is supreme love to our Maker, and love to our fellows as to ourselves, had been discovered in some cave, or dug out of some mound of the earth, or no person could tell whence it came, it must still be true. It *cannot be false*, because it is founded upon the character of God and the very nature of things. Deity must undergo an entire change, and the order of his moral universe be subverted, be-

fore it could prove false. So true is it, that "we have not believed cunningly devised fables." Securely established upon this eternal and immoveable rock, let the infuriate waves of infidelity roll and dash until their violence is spent, we cannot be harmed. But let christians be careful never to belie their religion, or forget what it is. Let them remember that "God," and their religion "is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."¹ "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love."² "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha."³ O let them remember these solemn and interesting statements, and they will no longer be content with ceremonies, while their hearts know nothing of love to God and each other; they will no longer grasp the shadow and miss the substance, or rest in the form, but deny the power of true godliness.

Should any one here inquire, how we may *know* that we love God, or what are the evidences of true piety, we reply by asking another question, viz. how do you know that you love any person or object in this world? Your answer to *my* inquiry, will also be an answer to *your's*: because love in its principle or essence is the same in all cases. It is a feeling, an affection of the heart, and its existence must be known to us, and will be manifest to others, always in the same manner. Now take the case of an *absent friend* whom you ardently and tenderly love. How do you *know* that you love him? You will perhaps say,

¹ 1 John iv. 16.² Ibid. v. 8.³ 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

I *feel* it ; my soul is drawn out in affection towards him ! Well, just so, if you love your God and Savior ; you must *feel* it too, if you possess this love ; and your soul will be sweetly drawn out in warm affection towards Him. If you love your absent friend you will often think of him. He will be in all your thoughts, especially in moments of retirement and meditation. You will often *speak* of him to others, especially those with whom you are intimate, and who are also friends of the beloved absent one ; “ for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”¹ You will be pained to hear him or his friends slandered, blasphemed, or abused ; or his cause and interests opposed or neglected ; and you will be always ready to defend him. You will be anxious to *hear* from him, and to commune with him by letter or otherwise, so that you can make known to him the thoughts and feelings of your heart. You will be anxious to be *with* him, to enjoy his company, and to see him as he is. Thus you know, and thus you give evidence to others, that you love your absent friend. Now *Jesus* is your absent friend ; apply the same tests, and you will at once ascertain whether you truly love him or not. Do you often *think* of *him* and all that he has done, and is doing for you, with pleasure and delight ? Do you often *speak* of him and his love to others, especially his friends, and thus show that your heart is full of the subject ? Especially do you delight to *commune* with him by prayer, and in the ordinances of his house ? O does your heart burn

¹ Mat. xii. 34.

to meet him in your closet, at the social prayer-meeting, in his house, at the sacramental board, and wherever he has appointed to dwell with his people? If not, you have no reason to believe that you love him, or possess true religion.

But the Bible has not left us in the dark on this subject. "If ye love me, keep my commandments,"¹ saith the blessed Savior; and his beloved apostle John tells us, "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."² Every true christian, therefore, will strive to keep God's commandments; not from dread or slavish fear, or as a burdensome duty; but out of love to Him. It will be his chief delight. He cannot be a wilful rebel. Like the child, who loves his parent, it will be his greatest pleasure to do his will, and he will be greatly pained and grieved when he falls into sin, or is betrayed into disobedience.

Again; he that truly loves God, will also love his *brethren*, particularly all true christians. For "if any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen."³ And "by this," saith Jesus, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."⁴

He that loves God, must also feel deeply concerned for the salvation of souls and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. He cannot be an idle disinterested spectator, but will be an active, zealous laborer in the vineyard of the Lord. The cause of God will

¹John xiv. 15. ²1 John v. 3. ³1 John iv. 20. ⁴John xiii. 35.

lie near his heart, and he will not only pray, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;" but he will also exert his influence and give of his substance that this prayer may be answered. In whatever sphere of life he may be called to act, he will always *show by his conduct*, that he loves God.

Such are some of the principal *evidences* of love to God and vital piety. Kind reader! do you possess any, or all of them, at least in some humble measure? If not, it is idle for you to talk about religion; you possess it not, whatever your professions and false hopes may be. You are yet in your sins, "without God, and without hope in the world." O if death overtake you in this sad and awful condition, you are undone forever. "Wherefore he saith, awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."¹ It is very clear, from what has now been said, that in his natural unconverted state, no man possibly can truly love God or possess vital piety: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."² Now all men's minds are by nature carnal; all are rebels; and therefore at enmity against God and his righteous government; but such minds cannot love God supremely while this enmity remains; hence they cannot be truly pious. The picture which the Scriptures give us of the condition of the natural heart is most appalling and humiliating. Of the inhabitants of the old world it is said, "And

¹Eph. v. 14.

²Rom. viii. 7.

God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually!"¹ *Evil, evil only, and evil continually!* Can such a heart love God, or be the seat of true piety? Impossible! Still more, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it."² "*Deceitful above all things!*" Now there are many deceitful things in this very deceitful world; but nothing so much so as the human heart! And the melancholy history of our race abundantly confirms the truth of this description. And to crown the whole, hear the Savior himself: "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witnesses, blasphemies! These are the things which defile a man."³ Can such hearts, we ask again, love God, or be fit temples for the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, without being regenerated? It cannot be. And yet thousands hope to be saved without a change of heart; vainly imagining that their externally good conduct, their professions of religion, and their ceremonial attendance upon the worship of God's house will take them to heaven! And many ministers of the gospel too, who are afraid of, and hate the very word *revival*, are content to freeze their people to death with frigid orthodoxy from year to year, but never inquire, nor seem to care, whether a single soul is converted or not!) O that men would

¹ Gen. vi. 5.² Jer. xvii. 9.³ Mat. xv. 18—20.

awake to the eternal importance of the fact, so clearly and fully stated in the word of God, that without a change of heart, no man can possess true religion, or be saved! All must be renewed in the spirit of their minds; old things must pass away and all things must become new, or all pretences to religion are utterly vain.

Since a change of heart is so important and indispensable, it may be proper, before concluding this chapter, to inquire briefly, *what we are to understand by the Scriptural doctrine of conversion or regeneration?*

The sacred scriptures employ a number of different words and phrases to designate this change; some of which are always used to signify the *entire* work and others are occasionally employed in a limited sense to denote a *part* of it. It is termed “creating a clean heart and renewing a right spirit”—repentance—conversion—being “born again”—being “renewed in the spirit of our minds”—“a new creature”—“old things passing away, and all things becoming new”—and the like. Thus David prays, “*Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.*”¹ Thus the Savior teaches, “Except ye *repent*, ye shall all likewise perish.”² “Verily I say unto you, except ye be *converted*, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”³ “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be *born again* he cannot see the kingdom of God.”⁴ Thus also the apostle teaches, “That ye *put off*, con-

¹Ps. li. 10.

²Luke xiii. 3.

³Mat. xviii. 3.

⁴John iii. 3.

cerning the former conversation, *the old man*, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts: and be *renewed in the spirit of your mind*; and that ye *put on the new man*, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."¹ "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but *a new creature*."² "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a *new creature*; *old things are passed away*; *behold all things are become new*."³

No candid inquirer after truth, can read such passages as these, without being convinced that the change which they describe is a most thorough, important, and indispensable work. We prefer giving our own views of the nature of this change in the language of several eminent christian writers of the present day. Says the Rev. WILLIAM JAY,⁴ on the subject of *the new creature*, "Four explanatory questions may be asked upon this subject, First. In *what sense* is a christian a new creature? Is it a physical or a moral one? It is only a moral one. New faculties are not given him; but his faculties have new qualities and applications. Hence the original complexion, or constitutional peculiarity, remains; and the *man* is seen even in the christian. His very religion takes a kind of hue from his natural character, whether it be sanguine or phlegmatical, tending to severity or mildness. And this is no inconsiderable proof of sincerity: for it is custom, it is formality, it is hypocrisy that produces sameness; that constrains

¹ Eph. iv. 23—24.² Gal. vi. 15.³ 2 Cor. v. 17.⁴ Jay's Discourses and Prayers, page 29.

the lively to revolt from cheerfulness ; the talkative to keep silence ; and the young to look demurely, and speak and move with the gravity of old age. Had I known the individual turn and temper of Martha and Mary before our Lord entered their house, I should have viewed them as hypocrites had Mary acted as Martha did, or Martha acted as Mary did : but when I see the one "sitting at his feet," and the other "cumbered about much serving," I see a difference ; but it is principle, operating according to character. To proceed. The man, therefore, continues the same as before, and yet is a new creature. His soul, and all its powers are the same ; he has not another understanding, another memory, another imagination, another genius ; but these are changed in their use, and sanctified. His body is the same and all its senses : grace does not give him another tongue or other eyes, and ears ; but they are now sacred to new purposes. His condition is the same ; he is not another husband, another father, another master ; but he is a different one : he is godly in each of these relations. He carries on the same business (if it is a righteous one :) but now he abides with God in his calling. He eats and drinks as before : but now whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, he does all to the glory of God. If the covetous become liberal, the proud humble and the prayerless devout ; they are new creatures as to religious purposes—and this is the subject in question. Compare Paul after his conversion with Paul before his conversion : his body and soul, his learning and abilities, and the ardor of his disposition, continued

the same ; and yet, was there ever a being so different ?

Secondly. *How far* does this change extend ? The reason of this question is obvious ; it is to keep persons from resting in things, which, though good in themselves, come short of it. A man may be baptised and not regenerated. A new creed, or a new denomination, does not make a man a new creature. It is pleasing to see a man reformed externally ; but he may abandon a course of profligacy, and live soberly and righteously, and yet not live *godly* in the present world. The new creation is not a change from vicious to virtuous only ; but from natural to spiritual, from earthly to heavenly, from walking by sight to walking by faith. To go still farther : a man may be convinced and not converted ; he may be alarmed and not have the fear of God in his heart ; he may receive the word with joy and be a stranger to the comforts of the Holy Ghost. Let us hear Paul. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature : old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new.”

His conceptions are new. His views of himself are changed. He discovers that he is a guilty creature, and deserves to perish ; that he is a depraved creature, and that his heart is infinitely worse than his life ; wherefore he abhors himself, and repents in dust and ashes ;” nor does he ever again recover those lofty thoughts of himself he once had. His views of the Savior are changed. He once neglected or despised him : but now he cries, How great is his good-

ness, and how great is his beauty ! and deems only those happy, who enjoy and serve him. His desires are new. He no longer asks, " Who will show us any good ?" but he hungers and thirsts after righteousness." " Yea, doubtless," says he, " and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. That I may win Christ and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith : that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." These are the desires of the new creature.

His pleasures are new. The pleasures of sin he abhors. The dissipations of the world he despises ; but it is his meat to do the will of his heavenly Father. He calls the Sabbath a delight. He is glad, when they say unto him, Let us go unto the house of the Lord. He finds his word and eats it, and it is unto him the joy and rejoicing of his heart.

His pains are new. He once felt the sorrow of the world that worketh death ; but he now understands that godly sorrow, which worketh repentance unto life. He is not insensible under the afflictions of life ; but says he, What is every other loss, to the loss of the soul ? O this evil heart of unbelief ! O this ingratitude towards the God of my mercy ! O this unprofitableness under the means of grace ! O this insensibility under the corrections of his Providence ! " O wretched man that I am, who shall de-

liver me from the body of this death!" These are the groans of the new creature.

His life is new. In simplicity and godly sincerity not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he now has his conversation in the world. How shall he that is dead to sin, live any longer therein? If he was not vicious before, he now abhors, from disposition, what he once only shunned from selfish motives: if moral before, his morality is now evangelized; and whatsoever he does "in word or deed, he does all in the name of the Lord Jesus."—After all this is only a specimen: the proposition is universal in its reference: "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new!"

Thus for Mr. JAY. The other two questions asked and answered by him on this subject are not material to the point now before us,—*the nature of a change of heart*—and hence we have not included them in our quotation.

We cannot forbear, however, to introduce another extract here, from an eminent living theological writer,¹ whose logical and lucid exhibition of this very interesting and important subject pleases us better, than any thing we have yet seen. He explains *regeneration* or a change of heart as consisting of the following *five* parts, or progressive steps: viz. the *Call or vocation, Illumination, Conviction, Penitence, and Faith*; to which he adds a *sixth, sanctification*, not as a part of conversion, but as a work subsequent upon

¹ See Dr. S. S. Schmucker's Popular Theology, pages 166, 167 etc.

it—the progressive growth in grace and increase in holiness of the faithful believer to the end of his life.

“1. The *call* or *vocation*,” says he, “is that invitation given to man by God, either mediately or immediately, to forsake his evil ways and accept the offers of mercy. The *immediate* call, is that which is given miraculously, of which the case of Paul is an example. The *mediate*, or ordinary call, is that invitation to reformation which God gives us through his word, the external circumstances of our situation, and the incidents of his Providence. This is the only call which men can now expect, it is given with equal sincerity to all who live in a gospel land, and brings salvation within the reach of all, by tendering to them those means of grace which they have the ability to use with sincerity, and the sincere use of which, the Holy Spirit will sooner or later make effectual to the conversion of the soul.

This view of the *call* manifestly pre-supposes the acknowledged doctrines of the church, that man if left to himself, neither would nor could turn to God; and that the means of grace, though wisely adapted to the end for which they were designed, are not able to convert the soul, without the additional influence of the Holy Spirit.

2. *Illumination* is that mediate act of God, by which, through the instrumentality of the means of grace, he imparts to the *inquiring* sinner correct and spiritual views of divine things. No one, who perseveringly and entirely disregards the *call* of God, ever becomes the subject of illumination. Because

this disregard includes in it the refusal to use the means of grace prescribed in scripture, through which alone the Holy Spirit illuminates the mind. On the other hand if the sinner give heed to the call of God, to attend to the things pertaining to his peace; that is, if he sincerely search the scriptures, inquiring, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do," and earnestly striving to conform to the will of God; he will find his views of divine things remarkably changed. His ideas of the moral excellence, especially the holiness and benevolence of God, of the extent, spirituality and justice of the divine law, of the evil of sin in general, and of his own sinfulness in particular, will become vastly more clear, correct, and practical. This state of the sinner's mind is also sometimes termed a state of illumination.

3. But this change of *views*, which is the first effect of divine illumination, will be accompanied by another and equally striking alteration in the state of his *feelings*. Viewed in this clearer and more spiritual light, the moral excellence of the divine character excites in the illuminated sinner, feelings of love and adoration; the law in all its extent and spirituality appears just, salutary and lovely; whilst the depth of his own depravity, the multitude and aggravation of his own sins, and his liability to the just displeasure of God, excite in him new feelings of remorse, sorrow and fear. These two effects of divine illumination are produced in a more or less gradual manner, and usually keep pace with each other. Sometimes both these effects are designated by the term *convic-*

tion, whilst at others, this name is applied only to the changed views of the sinner, whilst his new feelings are denominated *penitence*, or *repentance* in its limited sense.

Conviction, in the popular sense of the term, may therefore be defined to be the new and spiritual views of the awakened sinner, concerning his own sinfulness and exposure to the wrath of God, together with feelings of deep concern for his salvation.

4. *Penitence*, or *repentance* in its more limited sense, signifies those feelings of sorrow and remorse, excited in the mind of an (awakened) illuminated sinner by a consideration of his sinfulness and danger.

These feelings are different in degree according to the natural temperament of the individual, or his degree of religious knowledge, or the degree of his actual guilt. When this sorrow arises merely from a consideration of our danger, our liability to the divine wrath, it is termed,

a.) *Legal* repentance, and has nothing truly noble or hopeful in it. It is the same feeling which the impenitent robber often has when he anticipates the speedy execution of the penalty of the law upon him.

But when these feelings of remorse originate from a conviction of our sinfulness, of the turpitude of our conduct in sinning against so good a God, against our nearest and best friend, our constant benefactor, they are termed,

b.) *Evangelical* repentance, and belong to the noblest and most hopeful exercises of the awakened mind. They imply a perception of the intrinsic

odiousness of our sins, of the beauty of holiness, of the justice of our condemnation, of the spirituality and excellence of the divine law, and a preparation of heart to understand and appreciate the plan of salvation generally.

5. *Faith.* Justifying faith is that voluntary act of the illuminated and evangelically penitent sinner, by which he confides in the mercy of God through Christ for salvation, on the terms offered in the gospel.

a.) It is a *voluntary act*, and therefore we find it commanded as a duty.

b.) It can be properly performed only by the *illuminated* and truly *penitent*; because the blind and unrepenting sinner neither sees his necessity of a Savior, nor feels a willingness to conform his heart and life to the requisitions of the gospel. His faith, if he have any, is merely a historical belief of conclusive evidence, such as may be possessed by immoral men, and even by the devils themselves. The repentance requisite must, moreover, be of the evangelical kind. His *heart* must be deeply affected by the moral excellence of the divine character and his own sinfulness, and thus it is that "with the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness."

c.) Its *exact nature* is that of *confidence*, trust or reliance on God, and is similar to the confidence of a child in an affectionate parent, of one friend in the known character of another. It includes 1) a *knowledge* or belief of the character of God, and especially of the Savior as deserving of our confidence; 2) *feelings* of approbation and delight in this charac-

ter, especially as developed in the gospel plan of salvation, and 3) a *volition* to accept the offers of mercy on the terms proposed, that is, to act in accordance with this belief and feeling.

d.) Saving faith is accompanied by good works, by a life of holiness. No man can be sincere in his professed reliance on the Savior, who crucifies him afresh by voluntary sins.

e.) "Faith is the gift of God;" because it is he who calls, enlightens, and convicts us, and enables us to repent of our sins; without any one of which previous steps, justifying faith is impossible; because he affords us that knowledge of his own character and the plan of salvation, in view of which alone we can confide in him: and because, at this, as well as every other stage of our progressive moral improvement, he never fails to superadd the blessing of his Spirit to the faithful use of the means of grace.

6. *Sanctification* is a progressive conformity to the divine law and an increasing ability to fulfill its requisitions, wrought in the faithful believer by the Spirit of God, through the means of grace.

a.) It is the work of God's Holy Spirit; as we are abundantly taught in the sacred volume: "Being sanctified by the Holy Ghost."¹ That same divine influence, which was necessary at every previous stage of this moral reformation, is no less indispensable here.

b.) It is effected through the means of grace. The word, the sacraments and all other means of grace, together with the dispensations of his providence both

¹ Rom. xv. 16, 1 Thess. v. 23.

prosperous and adverse, are the principal instruments, by which the Parent of good advances the sanctification of the returning sinner.¹ Whilst the believer is living in the conscientious use of these means, and in thus pursuing the path of duty, the benign and transforming influence of the God of holiness is poured down upon him from on high.

c.) The *faithful* believer alone can be the subject of progressive change. Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit wrought through the means of grace; but so soon as the believer becomes unfaithful to his God, he both neglects those means and grieves away that Spirit, and therefore inevitably interrupts this glorious work. Sanctification, moreover, consists in an increase of holy habits in the soul; and the strength of these habits is augmented or diminished by every individual act. To maintain, therefore, that sanctification is invariably progressive in the believer, even when he relapses into sin, amounts to the repulsive position that acts of sin confirm our holy habits.

That the co-operation of the sinner, by the faithful use of the means of grace, is essentially necessary to the progress of this work, is also clearly taught in Scripture; where sanctification itself is, in this sense, even represented as the work of the believer himself. "Dearly beloved," says Paul, to the Corinthians, "let *us cleanse ourselves* from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, *perfecting holiness* in the fear of the Lord."²

¹ John xvii. 17, Rom. ii. 4, Heb. xii. 6, 10.

² 2 Cor. vii. 1, Rom. xii. 1, Heb. xii. 1, Ep. iv. 22, &c.

d.) This gracious change itself, as witnessed in the believer, consists in increasing conformity to the law of God and ability to fulfill its requisitions. The believer's *knowledge* of God and divine things, is expended by the habitual study of revealed truth; is corrected by being brought into contact with the infallible word; is rendered more spiritual and vivid by the vouchsafed influence of the Holy Spirit. Col. i. 9. His *feelings* on the grand subject of salvation, on the character and interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, become more ardent and intense. No subject lies nearer to his heart than the glory of his God, his own eternal welfare, and that of his fellow-men. The Savior acquires increasing preciousness to his soul, he perceives in him the chief among ten thousands, one altogether lovely, and as the hart panteth after the water brook, so does his soul long for God. Accordingly the tenor of all his *actions* too, evinces an increasing conformity to the divine law. His determination to live for eternity and God, acquires increasing strength and regularity, whilst he labors to lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth most easily beset him, and run with alacrity the race set before him. But as he advances in this process, he also finds his strength increasing. Before his clearer vision of eternal and divine things, the toys and baubles of this world dwindle into insignificance, and comparatively lose their tempting power. He finds himself strengthened with might in the inner man, and from a new born babe is gradually growing up to the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ."

Such, dear reader, is a change of heart, and such is true religion; have you obtained, and do you now possess it? O that the Lord may search and try your heart! that you may have no rest or satisfaction until you know from blessed happy experience, what it is to be "born again."

2*

CHAPTER II.

WHAT IS GENUINE REVIVAL OF RELIGION, CONSIDERED NEGATIVELY?

HAVING shown the nature of *true religion*, we are now prepared for the question, *what is a genuine revival?* To this we might reply in general terms, *a revival is the increase and more extensive diffusion of vital piety.* Wherever and whenever there is an increased and more solemn attention to religion; when the love, faith, and zeal of professed christians is aroused to greater strength, vigor, and activity; when the veil is torn away from the eyes of hypocrites and formalists, and they begin to tremble for their souls; when backsliders are reclaimed, and brought to do their "first works over again;" when careless sinners are awakened out of their fatal sleep of sin and death, and begin to cry out, "Men and brethren what shall we do?"—when we behold such a state of things, we need not hesitate to call it *a revival of religion.* But we must be more specific, and therefore shall endeavor to answer the question first *negatively, or show what a genuine revival of religion is not.*

First. A genuine revival of religion is not *the work of man, but of God's Holy Spirit.* Some open and avowed enemies of revivals have endeavored to excuse their conduct by declaring their conviction that *all* such scenes are the work of men, and that the Holy

Spirit is not in any sense the producing cause of the excitement. Now to this objection we reply, that if it were true, it would prove too much, and therefore proves nothing at all. It would prove that all experimental religion is the work of man, for it is always accompanied, even in individual cases, by the same *kind* of excitement, which exists in a revival. The experience of persons converted during a revival is precisely the same in its main features as that of those converted under any other circumstances. The awakening, the penitence, the sorrow for sin, the faith, and the peace and pardon obtained are precisely the same. Hence if it is the work of man in the one case, it must be so in the other. But we suppose the persons who make this objection would not contend that the conversion or regeneration of the soul is the work of man; but if it be not his work in an *individual* case, how can it be where *numbers* are simultaneously renewed? If it be beyond the power of man to make a single person "a new creature;" to regenerate one soul, giving it new, holy, and spiritual views, feelings desires and habits; is it possible for him to affect this in the case of scores and hundreds of souls at the same time? But that real conversions do take place at revivals is beyond dispute. Thousands of the most pious, intelligent, active, and exemplary christians that have ever adorned the American churches were converted during seasons of revival. Genuine revivals are therefore not the work of men; but of that Divine Spirit, who alone possesses the power to change and renew the stubborn and flinty heart.

This argument is not influenced in the least by the admitted fact, that *some* cases of *supposed* conversion at revivals are afterwards proved to be spurious, by the conduct of the individuals. It only shows that the persons themselves were either deceived or acted the hypocrite. And the records of the churches, which have been blessed with genuine and well-conducted revivals, show, that there are comparatively not more cases of falling away from among those who professed conversion during those seasons, than are found among those who make such professions under other circumstances.

We are however by no means to be understood as endorsing *every thing* which has passed under the name of revivals. Far from it. We are not the advocate nor friend of mere spurious excitements in religion. We agree with Dr. ALEXANDER¹ of Princeton, "that a revival or religious excitement may exist, and be very powerful, and affect many minds, when the producing cause is not the Spirit of God; and when the truth of God is not the means of the awakening. This we must believe," continues he, "unless we adopt the opinion that the Holy Spirit accompanies error by his operations as well as truth, which would be blasphemous. Religious excitements have been common among Pagans, Mahommedans, heretics and Papists. And in our own time there have been great religious excitements among those who reject the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, as for example, among the *Christ-ians*, who are Unitarians, and the

¹ Sprague on Revivals, page 229.

New-lights or Schismatics of the west, and the Campbellites, who deny the proper divinity of our Lord, and the scriptural doctrine of atonement. The whole religion of the Shakers also, consists in enthusiastic excitement. Hence it is evident, that revivals ought to be distinguished into such as are genuine, and such as are spurious. And the distinction should depend on the doctrines inculcated, on the measures adopted, and the fruits produced. "Beloved," says the Apostle John, "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God."

That such spurious excitements do sometimes exist even among professed christians and are called revivals we admit. Nay, that even in a genuine work of grace, there is sometimes much mere animal excitement, we also admit. Men may so interfere with the work of God as to grieve away the Holy Spirit, and cause it to degenerate into wild fanaticism. But this does not prove *genuine* revivals to be the work of man; nor does it form a valid objection to them. Tares will grow among the wheat; shall we therefore refuse to sow wheat altogether, or condemn both and bind them in the same bundles to be burned?

The Bible speaks of revivals of religion as emphatically the work of God. Hence David prays, "Wilt THOU not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee." Ps. lxxxv. 6. The prophet Habakkuk also believed *God* to be the author of revivals: "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy," was his fervent prayer. Hab. iii. 2.

No one will say that the great revival on the day of Pentecost, when three thousand were converted, was the work of man. Thousands of other revivals have occurred in different ages of the church which have given proof equally decisive of their divine origin. Any person therefore, who in the present day contends that genuine revivals are the work of men merely, is either ignorant of their true nature and so prejudiced that he cannot see the truth, or he must be an infidel. In neither case is his opinion worth a serious refutation. But if genuine revivals are the work of God's Holy Spirit, then there are two very important deductions which we must be permitted to make from this established fact. The first is, that if they are not the work of man, but of the Holy Ghost, it follows that no man nor set of men can *produce* revivals. If it belongs to God to revive his church, as it does to revive nature, then men no more can bring about revivals of religion at pleasure than they can of the seasons; no more than they can produce spring in autumn or harvest in the midst of winter. Consequently it is presumptuous and sinful for men to talk about "getting up a revival," just as though it depended upon their sovereign pleasure! Such language, if used to signify, what it really means, is an insult to God, and shows a state of mind utterly at variance with that faith and humility, which looks up to him and depends upon him for "every good and perfect gift," as well the blessing of a revival as all other blessings.

We are not, however to be understood as saying,

that in revivals God works *without means*; or that he does not employ human instrumentality to produce or promote them. On the contrary, it is by the faithful preaching of the gospel, prayer, the ordinances of the church, and all other scriptural and proper measures, that God converts sinners and revives his work. And the man who would expect a revival without, properly and faithfully using the means which God has appointed and will bless, would be acting as inconsistently and foolishly, as he who would expect a plentiful harvest without ploughing his field or sowing his seed. Still the work is God's, and men are only instruments in his hands for its accomplishment. *We* must preach, pray, and labor "in season and out of season;" but *God* must make our exertions efficacious. We must plant and water; but God alone can give the increase. We must feel our dependence upon God, and remember that he alone can perform the work; and yet must so labor and pray and use the means as if the whole work were *ours*, and we alone could do it.

Our second inference from this subject is, that if a genuine revival of religion be the work of the Holy Spirit, it follows that all *opposers* of revivals are fighting against God himself! This is an unavoidable but most solemn conclusion, and one should suppose needed only to be stated, to cause every opposer of the work of God to tremble. And yet, (we blush to record it!) some professed *christians*, and even christian *ministers* affect to sneer at the very name of revival!—Seem to imagine that they are doing God a service by oppo-

sing his own work !—Do really stand in the gate-way of heaven, refusing to enter in themselves, and hindering those who are striving to press into the kingdom ! Will not the blood of souls be found in the skirts of such men ? May the Lord save the reader from the fearful account which the opposers of revivals will have to render at the last day ! God has most gloriously vindicated revivals of religion, and proven to the world, that they are a grand and chosen means which he employs to multiply the triumphs of his grace, to build up and extend his church, and to gather lost sinners into his fold ; and wo be to that man who is wicked enough to oppose him in this work !

Secondly. A genuine revival of religion is not a scene of wild confusion and disorder of mere animal excitement. This cannot be if, as has been shown, it be a genuine work of the Holy Spirit ; for “ God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.” 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

There are two classes of persons, the one enemies, and the other *professed* friends, in whose minds religious revivals are always associated with scenes of the most enthusiastic excitement, and the utmost confusion and disorder. They imagine that such scenes constitute revivals, or that they are at least inseparably connected with them.

The first of these classes are *opposed* to revivals on the ground of the disorder and confusion attending them. They have probably never witnessed any well-conducted revivals, nor given themselves time to

examine their nature and good fruits. They have not therefore been able to distinguish between a mere excitement, and a genuine work of God's Spirit. They are of course incompetent judges, and in their unqualified condemnation of *all* revivals, act a very inconsistent and sinful part. If we have any hope of gaining the attention of such persons, we should like to reason the case with them, and endeavor to convince them of their error. We could tell them from our own experience, and that of all the ablest and most successful promoters and advocates of genuine revivals, that they are *not* scenes of mere animal excitement and wild confusion. But as most persons of this class are ignorant of true revivals, and are acting under the influence of strong prejudice, we have little expectation of obtaining even a candid hearing from them. We shall therefore proceed with our subject, and remark that there is of course *excitement* in a revival of religion; the very name implies it. Religion is itself a very exciting subject, and there cannot be *true piety* in the soul, much less a revival, without excitement.

Man, in his present state, is a compound being, consisting of soul and body, of intellect and passions; and as such religion is addressed to him. It does not change or destroy his natural character, his physical constitution: but it takes him as he is and seeks to govern both his head and his heart, his intellect and his passions. To suppose therefore that in religion, and especially a revival, men should manifest no feeling, no excitement of mind is to make them,

what they are not, purely intellectual beings; is to deprive them of half their nature. A purely intellectual religion, for men in this world, is entirely unsuited to their present condition and wants, and can never exert any permanent influence upon the mass of mankind. It must ever remain heartless, lifeless, comfortless, hopeless, and frigid as the atmosphere of Greenland. It may suit the atheistic philosopher, or the pantheistic neologist; but it is not the religion of the Bible, which is to heal the woes, dry up the tears, pluck the thorns out of the path and light up the star of hope in the benighted souls of earth's afflicted children. Men are in this world the creatures of want, of sorrows, feelings and sympathies, and God has given them a religion suited to their wants, adapted to their nature, and designed to go with them into all the relations of life, and to smoothe their pilgrimage to the skies. It is to work a most wonderful change in their views, feelings, desires and actions, and yet leave the natural temperament and constitution the same. It is to make the proud humble, the revengeful forgiving, the vicious moral, the covetous liberal, the profane prayerful, the careless devout, and the wicked pious. It is to direct man in his business, to comfort him in his sorrows, to support him in sickness and death, and to qualify him for heaven and bring him thither at last. And shall all this be accomplished without feeling or excitement? Is man eminently the creature of feelings and excitement of the passions, and yet must he manifest nothing of the kind in his religion! Do you find it impossible to in-

terest him deeply and permanently in any subject without enlisting his feelings and moving his heart; and yet must this not be done in religion? Religion! the subject above all others, in which all his dearest interests for time and eternity are centered. Look at the men of this world, the politician, the statesman, the stage actor, how do they succeed in interesting their fellow-men, and moving them to the most vigorous action? Is it not by interesting their feelings and exciting their passions? Could they ever succeed without this? Has not our country frequently been convulsed from one extremity to the other by some political question of confessedly little importance, only because the *feelings* of men were greatly excited? The fact is, you cannot interest men effectually and permanently in any subject, good or bad, or move them to decided and vigorous action, unless their feelings are strongly enlisted. On this depends your success in the cause of internal improvement, education, temperance, missions, Sabbath-schools, and Bible and tract operations. Will any man now be so stupid as to maintain that in religion and especially a revival of it, there must be no feeling, no excitement at all? Shall there be weeping and wailing, tears and lamentations around the bed of sickness and death; at a funeral, around the grave of a departed friend or relative; feeling and deep excitement upon all occasions and on every subject in which man is specially interested; and nothing of the kind in religion?

“Religion!—the *chief* concern
Of mortals here below.”

Religion! the most important subject that can possibly claim the attention of man this side of eternity; and upon which his everlasting destiny depends! There is to be no feeling, no excitement on this subject. Shall there be deep, pungent, overwhelming conviction of sin; an aching, melting, breaking of heart—of hundreds of hearts at the same time—and no excitement? Shall men be pressed to the earth under the load of their guilt; writhe in agony beneath the lashes of an awakened conscience; and amid tears of the most deep, sincere, and humble penitence, cry early for mercy, and what they must do to be saved?—Shall scores and hundreds do this at the same time, and must there be no feeling, no excitement?? Surely such a doctrine is most unnatural and absurd, and the man who maintains it has yet to learn his first lesson both in human nature and true religion.

But whilst it is most evident from the nature of man and of true religion that it is a heart-stirring subject, and that there must and will be deep and powerful excitement in a revival, it is also true that it is not a mere *animal* excitement—it is not a scene of wild confusion and disorder. We have already stated that such scenes have sometimes passed for revivals, where there was really no true religion at all; and that genuine revivals have sometimes been so mismanaged as to degenerate into the most rank fanaticism. But these are *abuses* of a good thing; and genuine revivals are no more responsible for these abuses, or to be confounded with them than the pure and legal coin is responsible for, or to be confounded with a spurious counterfeit issue.

But why be so fastidious about excitement in connexion with revivals ; why so much opposed to it, so much afraid of it here, when you act so differently in other matters ? Do not men love warmth, zeal, excitement on any subject in which they may feel interested, and seek to produce them for the purpose of promoting it ? are not frequently the very men, who cry out most against excitement in religion, the first and loudest to foment it during a political campaign or an election ? We have known men to be dreadfully shocked and offended at the excitement of a revival, who could enter into that of a horse-race or a ball-room with the utmost spirit ! Men are sometimes greatly displeased when their families become interested in the blessed scenes of a revival and attend the evening meetings for prayer and inquiry, when at the same time they can spend a good part or even the whole night with them amid all the excitement and demoralizing influence of a ball-room without any qualms of conscience ! The fact is that the opposition to revivals is opposition to *religion*. It is the natural enmity of the unconverted heart to God and his cause.

But what says the Bible on this subject ? “ To the law and the testimony,” for here this and every other important question connected with religion must be decided. If a single plain and unequivocal passage can be produced, in which all rational and intelligent excitement, such as is witnessed in well-conducted revivals, is condemned ; then we will give up the argument, and say, “ it is all wild fire,” mere animal ex-

citement. But no such passage can be found. On the contrary, the word of God encourages and insists upon the utmost warmth, zeal, energy, and excitement, of the proper kind in religion. "The Bible," says an intelligent writer,¹ "never speaks of our going too far, or feeling too intensely, in religion; but it often speaks of our falling short, and urges us to greater engagedness—provided always that our zeal be according to knowledge. It does indeed guard us against false fervors and erratic zeal; it apprizes of false prophets and of many of them; it warns us of Satan's devices, and speaks of a spirit of truth, and a spirit of error, with their respective marks; it speaks of false philosophy, false doctrines, blind guides, wells without water, clouds without water carried about of winds, trees whose fruit withereth, raging waves of the sea, wandering stars, with many such things: and we cannot too much heed such admonitions. But with these safeguards and precautions, it inculcates the greatest intensity, both of feeling and interest and every duty concerned in religion and salvation. Oh how it reproves our coldness, how it chides our sloth, how it abhors our apathy! Its language to the sinner is, strive, agonize, to enter in at the straight gate. Its language to the believer is, forget the things which are behind, and reach forth unto those which are before. Its language to all is, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and, Do with thy might what thy hand findeth to do. There is no degree of intelligent engagedness in the

¹ "Letters to a Disbeliever in Revivals," pages 28—30.

business of religion, no fervor of enlightened zeal, no measure of compassion or concern for the impenitent, no depth of humility and godly sorrow, no confidence of faith, no liveliness of hope, or measure of rejoicing, or elevation above the world, which the Bible censures as excessive. On the contrary, it is filled with the most stirring exhortations and incitements to such affections and behavior."

It should also be observed that the Bible *addresses* the feelings, the passions of men, and that many of its narratives and doctrines are calculated to produce the highest degree of intelligent excitement. How its account of the fall of man, and of his sinfulness and misery, is calculated to humble us? Its representation of our guilt and danger, and the thunders of the broken law rolling over our heads, to alarm us? How its narratives of the fearful judgments which God has sent upon the wicked are fitted to excite our fears, and cause us to tremble in view of our own exposure to that wrath? How its history of our redemption; of a Savior's humiliation, sufferings, and death; is adapted to meet and subdue our hearts? Its descriptions of the damnation and sufferings of the wicked are most awful: enough to alarm the most stoical. A lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; a fire that is not quenched; weepings, wailings, and gnashing of teeth; sufferings unmitigated and unending, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched—where the unhappy wretch is tormented day and night in those flames, and obtains not even the relief of a drop of water to cool his tongue!

Are these not descriptions which the Bible gives us of the lost, and are they not of the most exciting character, calculated to break and move a heart of stone? Of the same exciting nature also are its descriptions of heaven and of the future bliss of the righteous. A rest which remaineth for the people of God—the Father's house, in which there are many mansions—the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God—the new Jerusalem with all its splendor and glory—a being with Christ, seeing him as he is, and sitting down upon his throne, as he has sat down upon the Father's. Are such representations not in the highest degree soul stirring and exciting? Are not the passions and feelings of man—his hopes and fears—most powerfully addressed? Would God have done this, if he had intended that men should never be excited on the subject of religion. It is not true therefore that the excitement witnessed at genuine, well-conducted revivals, however intense and overwhelming, is mere animal feeling, the result of artificial stimulus. It is just what we would expect that such truths as those stated above, and many others contained in the Bible, applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit would produce.

“Examine revivals then by the Bible,” continues the writer just quoted, “in reference to their *quality* and *nature*. What is there that is not according to the Scriptures, in the fact of a people becoming generally and solemnly impressed with serious things, in their becoming thoughtful, prayerful, disposed to attend religious meetings, to read their Bibles, and to con-

verse on religious subjects; in their being less occupied with the business and pleasures of the world, and more engaged about the salvation of the soul? What is there in their being exercised with convictions of sin, and asking what they must do to be saved; in their being anxious, or dejected even, under a sense of their guilt and condemnation as sinners against God; or what if in some instances they literally smite upon their breasts, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," what is there in their shedding tears of godly sorrow, in their having great peace in believing in Jesus; in their shedding tears of joy; in their having new apprehensions of divine things, and new discoveries of themselves; in their lively hopes; their love and gratitude to God; their new sense of his goodness and mercy, and new devotion to his cause; in the tender endearment of Christians to each other; in their deep and practical concern for the impenitent; their many and earnest prayers; their frequent assemblies; their lively and their plaintive hymns; their earnest and affectionate exhortations; their hallowed sympathies with one another, and for anxious sinners—weeping with them that weep, and rejoicing with them that do rejoice:—what is there, I say, in these things, as to the *nature* of them, that is not according to the Scriptures? What is there that is unlike religion—unlike its workings and fruits—unlike the things which attended the ministry of Jesus and his apostles?"—Have not such seasons of deep interest and excitement in religion manifested themselves in every age of the world under the faithful preaching and labors of God's

chosen servants?—have they not appeared under the ministry of Elijah, Ezra, Nehemiah, of John the Baptist, Jesus Christ himself, and his holy Apostles and the primitive christians? Look at Elijah at Mount Carmel in controversy with the false prophets of Baal! Was there no excitement, no feeling among the people when the cause of God triumphed, and the impostors were confounded and put to death? Look at the scene that occurred under the ministry of Ezra, when, after the return of the Jews from their Babylonish captivity, the foundation of the second temple was laid! Was there no excitement when the people “sung together by course, in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good and his mercy endureth forever towards Israel?” When “all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid?” Let any one read the third chapter of the book of Ezra, and he will find that some of the people *shouted aloud*, and others *wept aloud*, whilst many sang aloud the praises of God. We should say there must have been quite an excitement here! Look at John the Baptist standing upon the banks of the Jordan, and preaching “the baptism of repentance!” We are told that there “went out unto him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan confessing their sins.” Matt. iii. 5, 6. What an excitement there must have been here! Look at the Savior himself when preaching his sermon on the Mount, or when the multitudes came out to him at the

well of Samaria—when he compared them to fields white unto the harvest, and they besought him to abide with them, and he remained two days, and MANY believed on him. What a stir, a revival there was among these people! Indeed the Savior's whole ministerial life was one of intense excitement among the people. He held a "protracted meeting" of more than three years continuance! Held it on the Sabbath and during the week, by day and often by night! Held it in the temple, the synagogue, the fields, among the mountains, in towns, and in the country. He did not confine himself to time or place or any fixed measures—seems to have employed "old and new measures" just as they might suit best and accomplish most good. He not only preached and prayed, but also conversed with the people, instructing the ignorant, comforting the mourner, and directing the anxious inquirer. Look also at some of the apostles of our Lord!—at Peter, for instance, on the day of Pentecost, when the greatest revival ever known occurred;—that which founded the Christian church, and whose influence is felt to this day, and will continue to be felt throughout all eternity! What are the facts here? Why, that thousands under the influence of the truth and Spirit of God, are pierced to the heart at once, and cry out "men and brethren what shall we do!" O what a tremendous excitement here!—what vast multitudes came out as mourners, and were especially directed by the apostle Peter! No doubt if some of our modern opposers had been there, they would have joined with those upon the spot, not only in condemning all this as

animal excitement, but in crying out, "These men are full of new wine!" Look also at the religious history of Paul! Was not almost his entire ministerial life one uninterrupted scene of excitement and religious revivals? Almost in every city and town to which he came, there was a great excitement. Some become converted, and some angry—some loved him and clung to him, but others hated and most cruelly persecuted him. He was certainly a great revolutionizer, for he was instrumental in producing excitements, which agitated nearly the whole known world.

Scores of similar facts might be adduced to show that there always has been excitement in connection with the revival and extension of true piety, and that none can exist without it. Will we still be told that revivals of religion are mere animal excitements? Then we should like to know whether those recorded in the Scriptures, to which we have referred, were also mere animal excitements! But the falsehood and absurdity of this objection to revivals is sufficiently apparent, and we shall pursue the argument no further. We shall no doubt be asked here whether there is not *some* animal excitement in every revival, and *how much* is allowable in a genuine work of grace? To this we have only to reply, that if men were angels there would of course be no *animal* excitement in their devotions; but as long as they are *men*, there must ever be some; and as long as there is not more of the animal in our religious excitements, than there was in those of the prophets, apostles, and the Savior

himself, we may well consider ourselves upon safe ground. The depth and character of the excitement will depend, in a great measure, upon the intellectual and moral character of the people among whom it exists, and the circumstances of the case. Where the community is highly intelligent and comparatively moral, there will be much less *apparent* excitement, than where there is and has been much wickedness and ignorance, though the work be equally, or even more extensive and powerful. The kind and amount of religious instruction which the people have had, will have a great influence. If they have enjoyed but little and very imperfect instruction in the principles of religion, have but a slight acquaintance with the doctrines of the Bible, and have been accustomed to noise, confusion, and disorder in the worship of God's house, there will be much more animal excitement among them in case of a revival, than among a people of superior privileges, and better training; and among such people a work of grace will also be much more difficult to manage properly.

The *temperament* of individuals also has much to do with the depth and extent of their excitement upon any subject. If the individual under conviction of sin, for instance, be of a sanguine temperament, be easily and deeply excitable upon any subject, he will manifest a much greater degree of feeling, than he of the opposite natural constitution, though his convictions and sorrow are perhaps in reality no deeper. This is accounted for upon the same principle, as that around the death-bed and funeral of a relative, one

person will be apparently much more deeply affected, and weep more than another, though both may have been equally attached to the deceased, and may feel, with equal intensity and bitterness, the wound inflicted upon their breasts by the stroke of death. All such, and any other circumstances that may be peculiar, must be well considered in the management of a revival, and those conducting it must act accordingly. Among certain people, and under certain circumstances, it might be impossible, and highly injudicious to attempt to suppress at once all, even what was manifestly *unnecessary*, excitement. Men might be led to regard it as opposition to the revival itself, and thus a genuine work of divine grace, instead of being fostered and extended, might be hindered and destroyed. But among a different people, and under other circumstances, it might greatly *promote* the good work to keep out of it all mere bodily exercise or excitement. Those therefore who conduct revivals need much of that wisdom which cometh from above, and which the Lord has promised in answer to persevering and believing prayer.

There is however another class of persons, as intimated upon a former page, besides *opposers* of revivals, in whose minds they are identified with scenes of wild confusion, disorder, and noise. We must now briefly pay our respects to these.

The persons here referred to are professedly the most zealous and thorough-going, but certainly very injudicious, *friends* of revivals. They seem to think either that all revivals *consist* in "the bodily exerci-

ses" of shouting, groaning, clapping, and loud and vociferous praying and singing, or that they are at least inseparably *connected* with them; and consequently, according to their notions, the greater the noise and *bodily* excitement of this kind, the more extensive and powerful they suppose the work to be! They could scarcely be made to believe that there was a work of grace, where there was an absence of such scenes of confusion and noise. Now we have no reason to doubt that many *such* friends of revivals are very sincere and honest in their attachment to the cause of God and their efforts to promote it, but they have certainly entirely misapprehended the spirit of true piety, and the nature of a genuine work of grace. We beg their candid attention, whilst in a calm and dispassionate manner we endeavor to reason the case with them.

Brethren! the subject is one of most serious and solemn import, and we beseech you to give it a prayerful examination. You claim revivals to be the work of God's Holy Spirit, do you not? If they are not, then they surely cannot be genuine, and ought to be opposed by every Christian. Now does not God tell us unequivocally, "that he is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints?" 1 Cor. xiv. 33. Does he not bid us, "Let all things be done decently and in order?" But if our revivals be scenes of confusion and disorder, can they be of God? Even if the work in the commencement was genuine will not its beauty and glory be greatly marred, if not entirely destroyed by the raging of this wild-

fire? Nay brethren, you are mistaken. The noise and confusion are not only not THE revival, but do not even form a necessary *part* of it. "Bodily exercise profiteth little;" and such scenes may occur where there is not only no revival, but no religion at all. We have seen almost a whole congregation shouting, clapping, and amidst the utmost confusion, making a deafening noise, when to our certain knowledge there was not a single case of real conviction or awaking, and very little true piety among the chief actors in the scene. Would you call *this* a revival? Surely it is a burlesque upon the very name. It was a scene of confusion and disorder, but not a revival; the Spirit and truth of God did not produce it; no persons were converted there, and no good fruits of piety and holiness appeared from it. Confusion and disorder in the worship of God are always wrong and can never be made right under any circumstances. True, in the management of great and extensive revivals, it may sometimes be impossible to prevent or suppress all evils of this kind; yet the people should be properly instructed on the subject, and all proper and lawful efforts made that all things may be done decently and in order. And our own experience has perfectly satisfied us, that in the great majority of instances, genuine revivals not only can be conducted without confusion and noise, but that as a general rule the work is real, deep, powerful, and lasting just in proportion to the absence of these things. "In a revival," says Dr. Alexander, "it makes the greatest difference in the world whether the people have been

carefully taught by catechising, and where they are ignorant of the truths of the Bible. In some cases revivals are so remarkably pure, that nothing occurs with which any pious man can find fault. There is not only no wildness and extravagance, but very little strong commotion of the animal feelings. The word of God distills upon the mind like the gentle rain, and the Holy Spirit comes down like the dew, diffusing a blessed influence all around. Such a revival affords the most beautiful sight ever seen upon earth. Its aspect gives us a lively idea of what will be the general state of things IN THE LATTER DAY GLORY, and some faint image of the heavenly state. The impressions on the minds of the people in such a work are the exact counterpart of the truth; just as the impression on the wax corresponds to the seal. In such revivals there is good solemnity and silence. The convictions of sin are deep and humbling; the justice of God in the condemnation of the sinner is felt and acknowledged; every other refuge but Christ is abandoned; the heart at first is made to feel its own impenetrable hardness; but when least expected, it dissolves under a grateful sense of God's goodness, and Christ's love; light breaks in upon the soul either by a gradual dawning, or by a sudden flash; Christ is revealed through the gospel, and a firm and often joyful confidence of salvation through Him is produced; a benevolent, forgiving, meek, humble and contrite spirit predominates—the love of God is shed abroad—and with some, joy unspeakable and full of glory, fills the soul. A spirit of devotion is enkindled. The

word of God becomes exceedingly precious. Prayer is the exercise in which the soul seems to be in its proper element, because by it, God is approached, and his presence felt, and beauty seen : and the new-born soul lives by breathing after the knowledge of God, after communion with God, and after conformity to his will. Now also springs up in the soul an inextinguishable desire to promote the glory of God, and to bring all men to the knowledge of the truth, and, by that means, to the possession of eternal life. The sincere language of the heart is, " Lord what wouldst thou have me to do ? " That God may send upon his church many such revivals, is my daily prayer ; and many such have been experienced in our country, and I trust are still going forward in our churches."¹

No true Christian can have witnessed and mingled in the scenes of such revivals as here described without being convinced of their heavenly origin and most blessed influence. He cannot fail to have been struck with the great contrast between such a work and a scene of wild extravagance and noise, and to have devoutly wished and prayed, that *all* revivals might be of this kind. We do not mean that in such a revival there is no excitement, no depth of conviction, no intensity of sorrow for sin, no agony of soul under a load of conscious guilt, no breaking up of the very fountains of the heart and profuse flowing of tears of penitence ; no ; what we mean is, that the feelings are under the control of the judgment, and that the excite-

¹Sprague's Lectures on Revivals, page 232.

ment is properly managed. And surely this is as it ought to be. Yet we say again, among some people it may be exceedingly difficult, perhaps quite impossible so to conduct a revival; still the utmost efforts should be made properly to control it, and so prevent it from ultimately degenerating into a scene of noise and confusion.

We regard the remarks of Dr. ADAM CLARKE, the pious and learned Methodist Commentator, on this subject, as highly judicious and to the point. In his comments on the 32d and 33d verses of the 14th chapter of 1 Cor. he has the following: "Verse 32. *And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.* Let no one interrupt another; and let all be ready to prefer others before themselves: and let each feel a spirit of subjection to his brethren. God grants no ungovernable gifts. Verse 33. *For God is not the author of confusion.* Let not the persons who act in the congregation in this disorderly manner, say that they are under the influence of God; for he is not the author of confusion: but two, three, or more praying or teaching in the same place, at the same time, is *confusion*; and God is not the author of such work: and let men beware how they attribute such disorder to the God of order and peace. The apostle calls such conduct *ἀνατασταςίαι*, *tumults, seditions*; and such they are in the sight of God, and in the sight of all good men. How often is the work of God marred and discredited by the folly of men! for *nature* will always, and *Satan* too, mingle themselves, as far as they can, in the genuine work of the Spirit, in order to discredit

and destroy it. Nevertheless, in great revivals of religion, it is almost impossible to prevent wild-fire from getting in among the true fire: BUT IT IS THE DUTY OF THE MINISTERS OF GOD, TO WATCH AGAINST, AND PRUDENTLY CHECK THIS; BUT IF THEMSELVES ENCOURAGE IT, THEN THERE WILL BE CONFUSION AND EVERY EVIL WORK."

To this decisive testimony of Dr. Clarke, we will add the no less unequivocal language of the Rev. JOHN WESLEY, the venerable *founder* of Methodism. In his sermon on the text 2 Cor. v. 16, after warmly remonstrating against the use of *too familiar* and *fondling* expressions when applied to the blessed Redeemer, he has the following emphatic remarks:—"Perhaps some may be afraid, lest the refraining from these warm expressions, or even gently checking them, should check the fervor of our devotion. It is very possible it may check, or even prevent, some kind of fervor which has passed for devotion. Possibly it may prevent loud shouting, horrid, unnatural screaming, repeating the same words twenty or thirty times, jumping two or three feet high, and throwing about the arms or legs, both of men and women, in a manner shocking not only to religion, but to common decency:—But it will never check, much less prevent, true, scriptural devotion. It will rather enliven the prayer that is properly addressed to Him, who, though he was very man, yet was very God, who, though he was born of a woman, to redeem man;

yet was God from everlasting, and world without end.”¹

We regard these testimonies of these two great *Methodist* writers, as the most important and decisive that can be given on this subject; because no one will contend that they were influenced by a fastidious and unfounded prejudice. And however some of their followers and admirers may have deviated from these plain and wholesome counsels, we are persuaded that the great majority of the more pious and enlightened ministers and members of the Methodist Episcopal church agree with them. It should also be observed, that it appears from the sermon itself, from which we have taken the above extract, that Mr. Wesley wrote it near the *close of his life*, and therefore it is the well-matured opinion of many years’ experience.

What we particularly object to in connection with some revivals is, that *Christians*, the professedly converted and pious part of the congregations, should make this noise, and cause this confusion and disorder. If at such times *awakened sinners*, deeply penitent and agonizing beneath the load of their guilt, should have an audible groan, or cry aloud, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” or “Jesus thou Son of David, have mercy on me;” we should be the last to say to them at the time, “Hold your peace!” Yet at such times we do say to *Christians* most emphatically, *keep silence*. And even the awakened should not be *encouraged* to give vent to their feelings in any loud and vociferous manner. It not only does no good, but if

¹Sermons on several occasions by Rev. John Wesley, vol. ii. p. 444.

encouraged, will increase and *invariably* do harm, and if not checked will soon entirely destroy the good work, or cause it to degenerate into a scene of wild fanaticism. The Spirit of God will be grieved, and take his departure from such scenes, and nothing but an artificial animal excitement will remain.

We are therefore opposed to noise, confusion, and disorder in all religion, and especially revivals, for the following reasons:—

1. *It is unscriptural.* Whilst, as shown upon a former page, the Bible encourages the utmost warmth and intensity of feeling and devotion in the service of God, it no where sanctions clapping, groaning, jumping, screaming, and the like; but emphatically tells us, “Let all things be done decently and in order.” 1 Cor. xiv. 40. Judgment and reason must always be able to manage scriptural excitement, so that it does not break out into wildness and extravagance.

2. *It is unnecessary.* Most persons who favor or do not oppose such scenes in revivals, are under the impression that they are *necessary*, and that to attempt to check them, would injure the revival and tend to grieve away the Holy Spirit. Now this we regard as a fatal mistake. Nay we *know* it to be an error from our own experience. We have mingled in the scenes of many revivals among all classes of people, and we have uniformly found, that the less noise and confusion, the deeper and more lasting was the work, and the greater and more permanent was the good accomplished. Yet all attempts to check these things must be very carefully and judiciously made. Let minis-

ters at the commencement of the work plainly and candidly and in the spirit of love and meekness, tell the people that noise and confusion are not the revival, and that "all things should be done decently and in order," and they will soon find, not only that proper silence and order will be observed, but that every genuine work of grace will be greatly promoted thereby. If any doubt this, we have only to beg of them to *try* it. We have tried it often, and our remark is the result of our experience.

3. *It does great injury* It does injury to the work itself. It impairs its purity. As God is not the author of confusion, so the Holy Spirit is grieved away just in proportion to the introduction of wild-fire and extravagance into the genuine work. And as the Holy Spirit is withdrawn, so the work degenerates—becomes less and less pure, until it is entirely destroyed. Men have meddled with it, and left upon it "the prints of their fingers, and thus created unsightly spots in a blaze of glory." It does injury to the work in another way. It offends intelligent and judicious persons, and frequently leads them to oppose revivals altogether. They are of course not justified in permitting the *abuses* of a good work to set them against the work itself, but the friends of revivals are nevertheless bound to use their best efforts so to manage the work as not to give any just cause of offence. Genuine revivals are the work of God, and *all* Christians should be united in promoting them. It does injury, because it opens the mouths of gain-sayers and revilers, and causes our good to be evil spoken of.

But for our extravagance probably some of these very men might have become subjects of the work, and thus be brought into the fold of the Redeemer ; but in this way we disgust them, and drive them away from all religion, and so hinder the gospel of God. We ought as far as possible so to manage revivals, and every other interest of religion, as to have a good report of them that are without. It does injury to the *subjects* of the work. It tends to deceive them. The extravagance and confusion will draw away their minds from the great and practical truths of the gospel—repentance, faith, and reformation of life. They will mistake their tears, sympathies, and animal emotions for a change of heart and submission to God. Our own experience leads us to believe that many of those very individuals, professed Christians, who are the most noisy and clamorous at revivals, are themselves deceived—have never been truly converted, and are ignorant of the nature of vital piety. They depend entirely upon their *feelings*, instead of the sober convictions of an enlightened judgment. For these reasons we are utterly opposed to extravagance, confusion, and noise in revivals of religion. Not that we believe that *any* work with which man has any thing to do is *perfect* ; but that we are to watch and pray, and use all proper means, that those precious revivals of religion with which God has so abundantly blessed, and is now blessing the American churches, may be untarnished in their beauty and glory, and accomplish the good for which they are sent.



CHAPTER III.

WHAT IS A GENUINE REVIVAL OF RELIGION, CONSIDERED AFFIRMATIVELY.

Two circumstances will enable us to answer this question intelligently and satisfactorily: *first*, the *etymology* of the word, and secondly, *the general usage of the Christian church*.

The term *revival* is derived from two Latin words, *re* and *vivo*, which literally signify, to relieve, to live again, or to restore to new life. It implies that the object or being to which it refers had a *previous* existence or life, but having died, declined, or fallen into disuse and neglect, is again restored to new life and vigor—*revived*. In this sense we have numerous revivals in the intellectual, moral, political, and natural world around us. We have *intellectual revivals*. When old systems of philosophy, education, or literature, which have long been exploded and thrown aside, are brought to life again; find new advocates and adherents, who restore them from their death, disuse, or decline, we say of them properly, they are revived. When, after a general neglect, the subject of education receives a new impulse, and renewed efforts are made to extend its benefits to all, and to interest all in its general diffusion, it is revived.

We have *revivals of manners and customs*. When antiquated fashions, modes, and customs again become prevalent, and “the olden times” are acted over again, we say they are revived. We have *business* revivals. Say the merchant, mechanic, and trades-man, when, after a general decline and deep depression, a distressing dullness and stagnation in business, a change for the better takes place, “the times have improved,” “business is more brisk,” trade has *revived*. So also we have revivals of politics, temperance, and almost every thing else. We have revivals in *nature*. Behold the earth after a long summer drouth! How it is parched by a burning sun!—how the crops, the flowers, and vegetation generally droop, wither, and fade! But now the Lord sends a gracious and refreshing rain, and what a change it soon produces. How natural and expressive for men now to say, “every thing is *revived*, nature seems restored to new life!” Look again upon the earth in the midst of bleak, barren, icy winter! How the frosts, snows, and chilling blasts of this season have stript the forests of their foliage, the meadows of their green, the fields of their gay flowers, and the earth of all her summer beauty! How desolate is the face of fair nature! But now the gentle showers, the genial sun, and the balmy breezes of lovely spring have returned, and see, what a resurrection from the dead they have produced! How the beauties of creation are restored, and what a glorious *revival* has not taken place! Thus we have a great many different kinds of revivals in nature, providence, business, politics, education, litera-

ture and the like, and every person understands what they are : shall we have none in *religion*? Does not the same God, who rules in the kingdom of nature and providence, also preside over the interests of his church, and rule in the kingdom of grace? Ought we not therefore to *expect* and *pray* and *labor* for *revivals of religion*?

In the sense of a revival now given, it is to be observed, that it can take place only among *christians*—only among those who once possessed true piety, but who have backslidden from the Lord, and lost their first love.—Persons, in whose hearts the flame of vital godliness once existed and burned, who have permitted that holy flame to be smothered and quenched, by the cares of the world, and the neglect of their christian duties. Such persons may, they ought to be, they must be revived or perish, in the sense of the word given above. And as *all* christians do backslide more or less, so all have need thus to be revived. Reader! professed follower of the Lord Jesus Christ! does vital piety flourish in thy soul as it ought at this time? Hast thou not reason even to humble thyself before God, and with deep penitence and sorrow confess thy sins of negligence, backsliding, and waywardness? May the Lord revive thy soul, and grant that thou mayest at all times have that heavenly life, manly vigor, burning zeal, and devoted ardor in the service of God, which thou oughtest to have!

But common usage has given to the word revival a more extensive signification. It is used to express

not only the quickening and reviving of *christians*, but also the awakening, conviction, and conversion of sinners, hypocrites, and formalists. It is generally applied to those cases of religious excitement, in which a number of individuals, or whole congregations, towns, or neighborhoods are simultaneously aroused to their guilt and danger, and begin to inquire, "Men and brethren what shall we do?"—when numbers of precious souls are brought under the regenerating and saving influences of God's grace. We may therefore define a genuine revival to be, A MERCIFUL VISITATION OF GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT, IN WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE QUICKENED AND EXCITED TO NEW LIFE, ZEAL, AND DEVOTEDNESS IN THE SERVICE OF GOD, AND HYPOCRITES, FORMALISTS, AND SINNERS SAVINGLY CONVERTED.

"Wherever," says Dr. Sprague of Albany, "you see religion rising up from a state of comparative depression to a tone of increased vigor and strength; wherever you see professing christians becoming more faithful to their obligations, and behold the strength of the church increased by fresh accessions of piety from the world, there is a state of things which you need not hesitate to denominate a revival of religion."¹

Such is the nature of a genuine revival, and the reader will not fail to have observed, that it is characterized by *three* prominent features: a quickening of christians, an undeceiving and converting of hypo-

¹Sprague's Lectures on Revivals.

crites and formalists, and an awakening and regeneration of sinners.

1. *Professing christians are quickened and revived.* There is usually at a revival "great searching of heart," deep humility, solemn confession, and mourning over sins of past negligence and coldness among the professed followers of the Redeemer. They are now anxious to discover their real condition in the sight of God, to have their hearts searched as with a lighted candle, and even the possibility of their being deceived, or having built upon a sandy foundation makes them tremble for their souls. O they now wish to make *sure* work for eternity! They most sincerely and penitently mourn over their former backslidings, coldness and indifference, and now commence of a new to "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling," and to glorify God in their bodies and souls which are his. O what love, fervor, faith, and zeal they now manifest! What attractions the Sabbath, and the house and ordinances of God now have! How the gates of Zion are now thronged, and what blessed enjoyment they now find in communion with their Lord; for their "fellowship is now with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ!" They are now always seen in their places in the church, at the communion table, and the prayer-meeting. How devoutly and earnestly they now join in all the exercises! Prayer-meetings now spring up in the congregations, and persons take part in them, whose lips were never opened before. They now pray in private, in their families, and for the church.

They converse with each other on the subject of religion, and are no longer ashamed to urge their friends and neighbors to seek the Lord. They no longer stand aloof from their pastor, or become offended at him for his close practical preaching; but they now uphold his hands and encourage his heart, and pray for him most devoutly, that he may be the mouth of God to the people, and that the word which he preaches may be "quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword" in the hearts of men. They now want spiritual preaching; and can no longer be fed upon the husks of a cold powerless orthodoxy, in which there is neither life nor spirituality. They now begin to inquire into, and read about the wants of the church and the world, and their hearts and hands are open and ready for "every good word and work." The cause of Education and Missions, of Bible, Tract, Sabbath School, and Temperance Societies now lays hold upon their affections, and receives their cheerful co-operation. Their hearts are now warmed up with the holy fire of divine love, and it spreads all around and ignites every thing with which it comes into contact. In a word, Christians now begin to *feel* and to *do* their duty. They are revived.

2. *Hypocrites and formalists are undeceived and brought to a saving acquaintance with the Lord.* Such persons are often received into the church and remain in it for years without discovering their real condition. For a long time they cry "peace, peace to their souls, though God has not said peace." But in time of a revival, if they attend the meetings at all, the scales

are very apt to fall off, and their sleepy leaden eyes to open upon their true condition. Their sandy foundations are now discovered, and their refuges of lies swept away; and thus divested of every false hope, they find themselves naked and exposed, in all their guilt and pollution, to the piercing eye of that God who cannot be mocked or deceived, and in agony they begin to cry out, what must we do to be saved? They now discover that all their own righteousness is as filthy rags, and that no external forms and ceremonies, no outward morality will avail without true piety. They now see that "neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." Hence they can no longer rest, and have no more peace, until they have experienced a saving change of heart, and can triumphantly say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

3. A third characteristic of a genuine revival is *an extended and sometimes general awakening among sinners, and numerous cases of hopeful conversion take place.* The truth of God faithfully preached and enforced by the Holy Spirit burns like fire in the hearts of the unregenerate; they become alarmed and uneasy, feel as they never did before, and frequently contrary to the wishes of their carnal minds, become earnest seekers of religion. Sometimes they endeavor to stifle their convictions, shake off their unpleasant feelings, and return to their carelessness; but their false peace is disturbed, and they find no rest. At length they submit, as humble penitents, to the only Savior of sinners, and embracing him by a living faith,

find their load of sin removed. Thus scores and hundreds are sometimes brought to the Lord, in the short space of a few weeks or months, and the moral and religious aspect of whole congregations and neighborhoods is entirely and radically changed. What a most blessed state of things is not this ! What christian's heart does not spontaneously and most earnestly cry to God, " O Lord revive thy work ! " in great mercy send us all, throughout the whole church, such revivals ?

CHAPTER IV.

ARE GENUINE REVIVALS THE CHURCH'S BEST STATE?

WE have now, at some length, examined the nature of genuine revivals, and are therefore prepared for the question, *is this the church's best state?* This certainly is an inquiry of thrilling interest, and claims a calm and thorough investigation. We have no doubt that our readers will be *divided* on this subject. Many who have just been blessed with interesting and well-conducted revivals, whose hearts are warm with the holy fire, and who are now gathering the blessed fruits of the gracious work, will exclaim unhesitatingly and even with much warmth, *revivals are the best and most glorious state of the church this side of heaven itself! Revivals will soon usher in the millenium!* Others, perhaps equally pious and devoted to the Redeemer's cause, will answer this question in the *negative*, and say, we love genuine revivals, properly and judiciously conducted, they have done, and will do much good; but they are *not* the church's best state; we can conceive of a state possible, which would be *preferable*. A third class who are ignorant of vital godliness and hostile to it, are of course opposed altogether to revivals. With this class we have no controversy at present; they are the enemies of God and his work;

and all we have to tell them is, that they are on the road to ruin, and "unless they repent they will all likewise perish." They are in a most dangerous condition, "without God and without hope in the world;" *now* under sentence of condemnation, and every moment exposed to his wrath and displeasure!

We once heard two zealous and devoted ministers of the gospel discussing the question which forms the caption of this chapter, and in giving as nearly as we can, the substance of their remarks, and the conclusion to which they came, we have no doubt we shall answer the question to the satisfaction of our readers generally. We will premise, that both these brethren were truly pious, and labored zealously and successfully in the vineyard of the Lord, and *they were both in favor of genuine revivals of religion*, but differed in their views of the subject. The one contended that well conducted revivals constituted the best possible state of the church upon earth; but the other maintained that they did not; that he could conceive of a state, and that he had known congregations to be in a condition, far preferable to that of revivals. Said Mr. A., "I do not *speculate* upon this subject; a cold, lifeless calculating human philosophy does not govern me in matters of religion; I submit *facts*, stubborn facts, to prove that revivals are the church's best state. By the fruit we are to know the tree, and if we look for a moment at the blessed and glorious *results* of revivals we *must* be convinced. Is it not a fact, that a single revival of religion has frequently, in the course of a few weeks, changed the character and destiny of a whole congre-

gation, town or neighborhood?—that in this short space of time, more souls were converted to God, more backsliders reclaimed, more formalists undeceived, the children of God more encouraged and built up, the church more strengthened and improved, and a greater amount of real good accomplished, than for *years* before? Have not revivals been the means of “pulling down the strong holds of Satan,” of breaking up the haunts of vice and crime, and of extending and firmly establishing the Redeemer’s kingdom in places, where humanly speaking, all other means had failed? Are not those congregations which have been blessed with revivals foremost in every good work, and is it not there alone that we find religion really *alive* and flourishing? Go into one of your old fashioned congregations, who know nothing of revivals and are opposed to them, and what is the state of things? Is not your very soul frozen and starved by the coldness, dearth, and moral death that reign all around? You find no prayer meetings, or if any they are as lifeless as the dry bones in the valley of death, no Temperance, Tract, Bible, Missionary, and Education societies, or if there are any, they are dragging out a miserable, languishing, unprofitable existence. The Sunday-Schools are neglected, and dying for want of support. The church is thinly attended and there is no life in the worship; the communion table is surrounded by few; there is no discipline exercised, and the most wicked men often rule; the members never pray in private nor in their families; and in a word, there is scarcely a shadow of any

thing like true piety to be found; all is one grand moral waste! But now go into a revival congregation, and how changed the scene! O what a contrast! All is life, love, faith, zeal, and devotion. You seem to be at once in the very atmosphere of heaven and to join in the worship of the skies! I confess sir, that my soul takes fire here, and I become enthusiastic on the subject. Give me revivals forever, until I get to heaven, and there I know I shall enjoy an eternal uninterrupted one!"

To this Mr. B. replied, "You have given us a most beautiful picture of revivals, and in general I believe it is a true, though rather a one-sided one. I am not opposed to, but highly in favor of true revivals; I believe they have done much good. May God send genuine revivals into every congregation in our land! But Mr. A. you certainly have presented only the *bright* side of the subject, and truth requires that I should present the other also. I am not fond of speaking of the *evils* connected with, and sometimes resulting from, any thing that is good, (I would to God there were none in connection with revivals!) but we must look at things as they are. I shall not *speculate* on the subject any more than you; let facts be submitted. Understand me distinctly, I am *not opposed* to genuine revivals; they are the work of *God's Holy Spirit*, and no Christian *can* or *dare* oppose *his* work. But I contend that they are not the church's best state for the following reasons:—

1. They are always of *short duration*, and are almost invariably succeeded by a *reaction*, a state of

coldness and backsliding as much to be deplored, as that which you described as existing in "the old fashioned congregations." My heart has often been cheered by the news of a revival in a congregation; but when, a few weeks or months afterwards, I was permitted to visit that people, I found, alas! that the revival was not *there*! The storm had blown over, and a dreadful calm had succeeded. Do you call *this* the church's best state? Must a congregation be all fire and excitement for a few weeks, that it may be all deadness for months and years afterwards? Do you call this a good, a desirable state of things? Does not the Bible teach that "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day;"¹ but revivals are like comets, which blaze and sparkle brilliantly, for a few days, as they pass along, but are soon gone, and all is dark and dreary again.

2. But I argue secondly, that revivals can not be the Church's best state, because of the *excesses* and *disorders* that are frequently, if not generally, connected with them. Are they not often scenes of the utmost extravagance and the wildest confusion? Are not the meetings often multiplied to excess and continued to a very late and unseasonable hour at night; so that the domestic affairs of families are often completely disarranged and neglected? Is there not in the meetings frequently so much loud groaning, weeping, praying, shouting, and the like, that the preacher, or

¹Prov. iv. 18.

he who leads in prayer cannot be heard above the tumult and confusion? Do not *professors*, (and we will charitably hope, *possessors*,) of religion, at such times, often make more noise than the mourners? I will not mention any of the more gross and unbecoming disorders, which I have occasionally heard, are connected with revivals. I believe they are upon the whole of rare occurrence, and always result from great mismanagement. But those, and others like them, which I have now specified, I cannot sanction; nor can I believe that is the best state of the church, which gives rise to and approbates them.

3. But I say again, these excitements cannot be the church's best state, because they tend greatly to *undervalue* and even counteract the influence of the *ordinary* ministrations of the gospel, and set up *erroneous standards* in the church.

Revival christians are very apt to think, that no good can be done, except *during* a revival! Hence the pastor may preach, pray, and labor most faithfully, in season and out of season, on the Sabbath and during the week; it is all to no purpose—his people are waiting for the next protracted meeting, or other extraordinary occasion, when an excitement will be “got up,” and then they will all at once take fire! They seem to have *expected* no blessing upon the ordinary labors of their pastor, did not pray for it, and of course did not obtain it. The standard has been set up that there can be no true religion, no conversions to God, no backsliders reclaimed, no believers revived and built up, except during an excite-

ment; hence christians may be cold or hot, active or asleep, dead or alive just as the revival goes or dies away! Now does the Bible warrant this continued ebb and flow in the tide of true piety? Is a man to grow in grace, advance in the divine life, and manifest his religion to the world only "by fits and starts!" Are not christians called "the light of the world," and should they not therefore, like the glorious sun in the firmament, "let their light shine" with a *constant* and even increasing effulgence, "so that others might see their good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven?" Should they not be "constant and immovable, ALWAYS abounding in the work of the Lord?" For these reasons I cannot believe revivals, as they generally exist, to be the church's best state. Yet I am not opposed to *genuine* revivals, for I believe, notwithstanding the evils which are mostly connected with them, that they have been the means of accomplishing much good. I am also convinced that most, perhaps all, of these evils might be avoided by proper management. I have spoken of things as they *are*, and not as I could *wish* them to be."

Mr. A—"I admire your candor Mr. B—and rejoice that you have spoken your mind so freely and fully on this important subject. You have certainly presented the *dark* side of the revival picture, and I think quite as highly colored as the truth will admit. You of course do not expect that revivals should be *perfect*, and free from all objections. If you did, you would have to object to *religion itself*, and every thing else that is good, with which poor imperfect man has

any thing to do. Our religion came from heaven, and is pure and holy as its author; yet we see many most cruel contortions, misrepresentations, and abuses of it. So revivals are from heaven, the work of the Holy Spirit, but they exist among, operate upon, and are managed by men, whose imperfections and weaknesses often appear conspicuously in connection with them. But we cannot, we dare not oppose them on this ground. On the contrary we should endeavor to correct the evils and promote the good.

But as you have given your objections in a little sermon under *three* distinct heads, I must take the same course in my reply.

1. You object to revivals, because they are of *short duration*, and are succeeded by a *reaction*, as you call it. Now suppose I grant, that all you say under this head is true, is not this state better still, than one of *uninterrupted* coldness, deadness, and formality? Is it not better to wake up occasionally, and have a little fire and excitement, even if it does not continue long, than to be *always* asleep and inactive? Surely a small shower of rain, though it be of short duration and be succeeded by another drouth, is better than none at all, and an everlasting, uninterrupted burning drouth! But your statement is not altogether true, and is calculated to mislead. *All* revivals are *not* of such short duration, nor succeeded by such reaction as you represent. On the contrary I have known many of a very different character. I have known them to continue for many months, and even for years, without being followed by any reaction at all. Not that the

same *degree of excitement* continued all the time, but the same lively, deep-toned, warm, zealous, active state of piety. I have known revival congregations to enjoy such a delightful state of things uninterruptedly for years; and I believe it possible for all revivals to be thus continued. These are the kind of revivals that I love to see, and particularly advocate. This I call the church's best state. There is nothing connected with genuine revivals themselves that should limit their duration to a few weeks, and cause them to be followed by a reaction, such as you have described. It always results from mismanagement of the good work.

Besides, the *fruits* even of such mismanaged revivals are not of such short duration. There are always some cases of genuine conversion to God; some individuals who are really brought into the kingdom of Christ, and remain faithful until death. Hence I conceive that your first objection not only loses all its force, but really falls to the ground.

2. But you say great *excesses* and *disorders* are sometimes connected with revivals. I grant and deeply deplore that this has *sometimes* been the case. Scenes have sometimes been connected with revivals, and have even passed and been mistaken for them, which were disgraceful to religion and to those concerned in them. Such scenes have in all ages of the church been connected more or less with the most sacred and solemn institutions of religion, and yet you do not oppose *religion* on that account, nor should you object to revivals, because some fanatical persons have

abused them. I am not the advocate of confusion and disorder, I assure you ; but I do know from my own experience that revivals may be conducted, that the most extensive and powerful always are, without any extravagance, confusion, or disorder. Hence it is unjust for you to attempt to palm upon revivals an objection which lies only against an *abuse* of them.

3. You affirm that revivals tend to *undervalue* and even *counteract* the *ordinary* ministrations of the gospel, and to set up *erroneous standards* in the church. Now I deny that this is the legitimate tendency or result of revivals. Ignorant and fanatical people may here, as in the former case, abuse a good thing ; but revivals are the very last means to induce intelligent and reflecting men, warm hearted and devoted christians to undervalue the ministrations of the gospel. True, they become dissatisfied with cold formality, and lifeless, soul-chilling stupidity in the service of God ; but it only makes them prize more highly the true and spiritual ministrations of the sanctuary. So far are revivals from undervaluing the ordinary labors of the zealous pastor, that I have known many to commence and to be carried on throughout under his ordinary labors *alone*, and unspeakably to facilitate all his future operations. No *wrong* standards are *set up*, but many torn down, and *right* ones set up. Revivals do not warrant nor encourage the ebb and flow in the tide of true piety to which you refer. On the contrary, they urge christians continually to “walk with God,” and to “keep themselves in the love of God” at all times and under all circumstances. Having now,

as I conceive, given a satisfactory reply to your objections, you will permit me to ask you one question, viz. If *revivals* are not the church's best state, *what* do *you* regard as such?"

Mr. B—"I want a lively state of piety in a congregation at *all times*. If revivals would *continue*, if we could *always* have them, and divest them of the unnecessary *animal excitement* usually connected with them I would agree with you, that they are the church's best state; and then I think the whole world would soon be converted to God. But I cannot like these storms and calms, these ebbs and flows in true religion."

Mr. A—"I heartily rejoice Mr. B—that after all we really do agree substantially on this interesting subject. I do not advocate the *evils* connected with revivals, but only the good. O if we could have *constant* revivals of the right sort, (and why may we not,) would it not be heaven upon earth! We both agree Sir, for *this* certainly would be the church's best state. The evils you have mentioned are not *necessarily* connected with revivals, they may be avoided. There need not, there should not be a *calm* and a dreadful *reaction* after a revival, and in many cases there is not. If the work is properly managed, we may have a lively state of piety at *all times* in our congregations, and thus have *constant* revivals."

Mr. B—"I am really pleased with your idea of an *ever continuing* lively state of piety, but I would not call it a *revival*, for it would supersede the necessity of revivals altogether. For if revivals are neces-

sary at all, it is because there is first a *dying, declining, backsliding* in the service of God, but where there is nothing of this there cannot be *reviving*."

Mr. A— "I am not contending about *names*, but *things*, and hence you may call it *an ever-continuing lively state of piety*. It is after all, just what is generally meant by a *revival*. Now Sir, it is very evident that a *constant* revival is preferable to an *occasional* one. O for *constant, everlasting* revivals of religion!" "Amen, amen," said Mr. B— and so the discussion ended.

CHAPTER V.

CONSTANT REVIVALS.

WE have no doubt that the idea of a *constant* revival of religion will be regarded by many as a *new* doctrine, if not a *new measure*. Some lean, barren, cold-hearted formalists would look upon such a state of things as a most dreadful calamity. What! a *constant* revival! Alarming thought! What will the world yet come to? They have suffered enough from the *occasional* revivals of which they have heard and read, and have mourned over this spirit of fanaticism and wild-fire which is “turning the world upside down;” what would become of them if we should have them constantly! That the church may be preserved from such a state of ruin they pray and labor most earnestly! Still the friends of vital piety need not be alarmed at this, for it is only “the effectual fervent prayer of THE RIGHTEOUS man, that availeth much” with God; and the prayers of the Bible, and of all Bible-christians are against these formalists.

But there are others, who love vital piety and genuine revivals, and who have experienced the power of true godliness in their own souls, who believe that a *constant* revival is an *impossibility*—that it is only *theory* with us, and has no existence, but in our own

imagination. We have reason to believe that this notion prevails extensively, perhaps we ought to say *generally*, even among revival christians, in our American churches: nevertheless we not only venture to differ from this opinion, but to declare our conviction that it is utterly erroneous, and that it is a great barrier in the way of the work of God. Let christians generally in a congregation or neighborhood, or the church at large, be under the impression that revivals are necessarily always of short duration, and like

“ Angel visits, few and far between ;”

that like hail-storms or comets, we are to expect them only now and then, at long intervals, and only for a little season, and what will be the result? The answer is obvious. Such persons will not and cannot expect, labor, nor pray *sincerely* for the out-pouring of God's Holy Spirit, until the time fixed in their own minds for the occurrence of the important event arrives! Their tears and lamentations over “ the dry bones” in the valley of moral death must all be restrained until the favored revival season comes! the pastor may preach, labor, and pray ever so faithfully; all the means of grace may be regularly and sincerely used; it is all in vain, the *revival time* has not come! Now is it not evident that the effects of all this must be most disastrous, eminently calculated to hinder the cause of God, and prevent the revival of his work. The means of grace are not followed up by proper efforts among the people; the seed of the word is not watered by their prayers and tears; the professed people of God have no faith, and hence do not sin-

cerely expect God's blessing, and of course little or no good can be accomplished.

Sometimes God most signally confounds this fatal delusion by sending, in the order of his Providence, powerful and almost miraculous revivals into congregations when the members are all asleep, and neither expected nor prayed for such an event! Hence we sometimes have such news as the following published through the length and breadth of Zion: "We have had a most powerful revival of religion; and what is remarkable, *it commenced when we did not expect it*, and when no special efforts were made to produce or promote such a work!" Now ought we not to say, shame upon such faithless, sleepy, inactive christians, who instead of being always alive, ever laboring and praying, "in season, out of season," that souls might be converted, backsliders reclaimed, the work of God revived and the Redeemer's kingdom built up and extended, look upon it as almost an accident when these things are done amongst them! They pray, no doubt, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;" and yet when that kingdom does come, and that will is done, they are not ashamed to confess to the whole world, "*the work commenced when we did not expect it, and when no special efforts were made to promote it!*" Yea double shame upon such christians for permitting the good work, after a few weeks, to die away; or perhaps, what is worse, for positively quenching and grieving away the Holy Spirit, and then saying, "we have HAD a revival!" intimating that the work has stopped; that they are

glad that it came, and are not sorry that it is all over!! Now we should like to ask such persons, if *constant* revivals are impossible, *how often* we may expect them? We have heard of Christians who supposed that every *fourteen* years we might expect a revival! Others thought that once every *seven* years, or thereabouts, we might look for one in a congregation! Now in the name of all that is sacred and honest, we ask, if all this is mere theory or conjecture, whether *ours*, or the seven or fourteen year theory is the better or more plausible? If genuine revivals are really the work of God, and productive of the most blessed results, is it not more desirable to enjoy them *constantly*, than every seven or fourteen years, and then only for a few short weeks at a time? Is it not more honorable to God, who has promised his blessing upon *all* our sincere efforts and that at all times—who has said, “Lo I am with you *always*, even to the end of the world”—“and where two or three are gathered together in my name, there will I be in the midst of them;” is it not more honorable to our God and Redeemer, and more in accordance with his own character and word, that we should have his presence with us constantly in revivals, than that we should have it only occasionally and at long distant intervals? But it is not mere theory or conjecture. Constant revivals *are* possible and practicable.

1. There is nothing in the *nature* of genuine revivals to lead us to believe that they are to be enjoyed only at certain widely separated intervals, and but for a few weeks at the time. What is a revival? It has

been defined to consist of three prominent features: the quickening and spiritual growth of christians; the undeceiving and regeneration of hypocrites, formalists, and backsliders; and the sound and thorough conversion of impenitent sinners. Are these eternally important results of christian effort to be looked for only occasionally?—every seven or fourteen years? How absurd! On the contrary, are not these the legitimate fruits of the proper and faithful use of the means of grace at *all times*? Whenever an evangelical sermon is preached, a prayer meeting held, and the ordinances of God's house administered faithfully and sincerely, are we not to expect God's blessing, and as the *immediate* result, the building up of believers, and the conversion of sinners? But all these means of grace we are to use *constantly*, in season and out of season; and God's blessing we are *always* to expect, and why then may not the same results constantly be expected? Hence constant revivals are possible. This conclusion is inevitable, unless the absurd and sinful position be assumed, that the means of God's own appointment may be properly, sincerely, and faithfully used, and yet be unaccompanied by his divine blessing, and consequently fail to produce the results for which they were designed! If this were so, then we might as well not use them at all. Then let us close our churches, and preach, and pray, and labor no more; God will do his own work in his own time without our poor instrumentality! Such a doctrine is absurd and wicked. Is not the work to be accomplished at revivals, *every day* work?—just what we

ought to aim at and expect in all our efforts to do good? Did not the apostles preach, pray, and labor as though they expected *immediate* results? Did they not address sinners in the name of God as though they expected them to yield *immediately*, and become converted right on the spot? Do you ever hear an apostle tell his congregation of impenitent hearers, as is often done at the present day, to "go home and think about these things?" That is, in fact, telling them to *continue* in sin and rebellion against God! No wonder that men who have this notion and preach in this style, do not believe in the possibility of constant revivals! We say again revival work is *every day* work, and it ought to be the object of our continued and unceasing efforts. Hence constant revivals are possible. Let it be distinctly understood that we have not now said, and that we do not maintain, that *the same degree of excitement* in connection with revivals should continue constantly. This is impossible. External excitement upon any subject varies with circumstances. The excitement however is not *the* revival, and is no correct criterion to judge of its true character and extent. The most powerful and extensive work of grace is sometimes accompanied by the least external excitement; whilst great excitement is sometimes manifested where there is little or no good accomplished. Nay, it is to be feared, that one grand reason why many of our revivals have been of such short duration is, that the *mere* excitement has been encouraged and fostered to the neglect and injury of the genuine work of the Spirit, or the former has even been mistaken for the latter.

Consequently the Spirit was either grieved away, or when the excitement measureably subsided, the impression began to prevail, that the work was at an end ; that the operations of the Spirit were withdrawn ; and that no further exertions need be made ! No wonder that the work did stop soon after it had fairly commenced, and probably at the very moment when it was becoming most pure and genuine ! Probably but for this erroneous impression, this sinful mistake, the revival might have *continued* for months or years ; the work of edifying and building up believers ; of reclaiming backsliders ; and of awakening and converting hypocrites, formalists, and impenitent sinners might have *continued uninterruptedly* until *all* in the whole congregation, town, or neighborhood would have been brought under the saving influences of divine grace, and made what they ought to be. This surely is *possible* ;—is just what God desires and intended should be accomplished by the faithful and persevering use of the means of grace. The *excitement* may abate—may even die away ; but still the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Spirit will continue, and if the appointed means are properly and faithfully used, the genuine work of revival will continue, like leaven, to spread and increase until the whole lump is leavened.

2. If then there is nothing in the *nature* of a genuine revival to prevent it from *continuing indefinitely*, we should like to know, in the second place, whether there is any thing in the word of God to warrant us to conclude, *that the Spirit of God, which is the pro-*

ducing cause of the revival, will ever be withdrawn, if not willfully grieved away? Does God any where tell us, or intimate, in the scriptures, that under the New Testament dispensation, he will not give his Holy Spirit *constantly*, but that occasionally and at long intervals he will pour out that Spirit for a little season to continue three or four weeks, and then it shall be withdrawn for months and years! If God does give his Spirit only at certain seasons, then of course it is *his* fault that our revivals are of seldom occurrence and short duration! But we almost tremble to make this statement, for such a doctrine is evidently blasphemous. The Bible contains no such doctrine or intimation. On the contrary has not the Savior procured for us by his intercession, and promised to us, the *continued* influence of the Holy Ghost? What does he say? “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may **ABIDE WITH YOU FOREVER.**” John xiv. 16. This Comforter has come, and he has abode with his true church and people *constantly* ever since the day of Pentecost, and will continue with them until the end of time. Let us hear another scripture: “And it shall come to pass in the last days,” (that is, under the gospel dispensation), saith God, “I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my hand-maidens I will pour out, in those days, of my Spirit; and they shall prophecy.” Acts ii. 17, 18. Here the Spirit is promised, already

in the prophecy of Joel, from which the apostle Peter quotes the words, and applies them to the case before him on the day of Pentecost: is there a single word or intimation that this Spirit shall ever be withdrawn? None. If then the influences of the blessed Spirit of God are vouchsafed to his church at *all times*, and we may *always* secure them, and it is by this means that genuine revivals are produced, who will yet contend that *constant* revivals are impossible? We know indeed that this Spirit may be grieved away, may be quenched;—that men may carry their resistance to his influences to such a length, that God will say to them, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man;” Gen. vi. 3, “Ephraim is joined to his idols: let him alone.” Hos. iv. 17. “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes.” Luke xix. 42. But what we are now contending for is, that *God* never withdraws the operations of his Spirit; unless *men* by voluntary, long-continued, and stubborn rebellion grieve him away. Hence *they*, and they alone, are the cause of his departure, and are guilty in the sight of God. Hence said the martyr Stephen, “Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, YE do always RESIST the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.” Acts vii. 51. The point then is certainly very clear, that the Holy Ghost is never withdrawn, unless he is willfully resisted, or grieved away. Equally clear is it, that a revival will continue as long as the influences of the Spirit are

continued; that is, constantly, until the Holy Ghost is resisted by the people.

We shall no doubt be told here, that in every revival the Spirit is resisted, and in many entirely grieved away, and that therefore, according to our own showing, the work *cannot* continue. To this we reply that it does not affect the point now under discussion, viz. the *possibility* of constant revivals. The people *need* not resist the Spirit; they *ought* not to do it, and if they do not, his operations will continue, and a constant revival is possible. And this is the very truth that we wish to fasten upon the conscience of the reader. We wish to lay a living coal of fire upon the heart of every saint and sinner just here, and say to him most emphatically and solemnly: Constant revivals are possible; God designs that they should be so, and gives his Spirit and *continues* his operations for this very purpose; and where they are not, it is *your* fault! We desire to say to every christian congregation, to saints and sinners, to pastor and people, where a revival has commenced, and a genuine work of grace is in progress, that revival *may* be continued, not for a few weeks only, but for years, *constantly*; God wishes that it should be continued and will not fail to do his part, and if it is not continued—if it stop after a few weeks, and is succeeded by a dreadful decline, by a *reaction*, as you call it, *it will be your fault*! At your door the guilt will lie. You willfully, perseveringly, stubbornly resisted the Holy Ghost, and hence the work has ceased.

We shall probably be met here by another objec-

to the doctrine of constant revivals; viz. that *facts* contradict it. The church, the objector will say, has been blest with many revivals in different ages, and none of them has been constant; and this is conclusive proof that they were never designed to be so. This objection, at first view, possesses a good degree of plausibility; but more mature reflection, and attention to the sense in which we use the phrase, constant revival, will show that it is utterly fallacious.

3. Hence, we wish to remark, in the third place, *that there have been many most remarkable revivals in the church, which have, in one sense, almost literally been constant and unending.*

The great revival on the day of Pentecost continued, though not in the same manner, yet in different forms and places, and under different modifications, for some two or three hundred years after it first commenced at Jerusalem. Sparks of the holy fire which came down from heaven upon that day, were scattered, as by that "rushing mighty wind," almost over the known world, and by the labors of the apostles were, a few years afterwards, kindled into flames upon a thousand different altars. The gospel was preached, the same Spirit poured out, sinners were converted, and churches planted in almost every city and town of the vast empire of the Romans. In fact that same celestial flame is not extinguished yet, and never will be until the consummation of all things.

The revival of true religion at the reformation of the sixteenth century has also proved itself to be a *constant* one; and we bless God, that we have reason

to believe that it is destined to continue until the whole world shall be brought to a knowledge of the truth. The successive revivals in Germany under the labors of Arndt, Spener, and Francké were also of long duration; and although infidelity succeeded measurably in smothering the flame for a while, we rejoice to be assured that it has never been entirely extinguished, but is latterly beginning to break out anew in many parts of the country where it was first kindled. The revivals commenced in England under the zealous labors of Wesley, Whitefield, Rowland Hill, and others, and which resulted in the spiritual reformation of the English church, and the establishment and wide extension of the Methodist Episcopal church, have also, in one sense, truly been *constant*; yea, and they are still progressing gloriously, both in England and America, and seem destined to extend their influence over the world.

But, what is more immediately in point, we have also known and read of individual congregations, which continued in a state, that might appropriately be called a constant revival, for a number of years. Such, for example, is said to have been the flourishing condition of the congregations of Richard Baxter, of John Brown of Haddington, and of Dr. Romaine of London, for many years. Such too we have known to be the case with congregations in this country among different orthodox denominations of Christians. It would, for obvious reasons, be improper to mention names; but we are personally acquainted with congregations which have enjoyed a state of revival unin-

interruptedly for a number of years. A lively state of piety has *continued*; christians have been active in every good work, feeling and doing their duty; the church was crowded sabbath after sabbath with attentive and devout worshippers, who were not forgetful hearers, but *doers* of the word; almost every sermon was the means of awakening and converting some souls; there were always some anxious inquirers in the congregation, and almost every prayer meeting was an *anxious* meeting; the members generally were in earnest to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, and were zealously laboring to bring all others over whom they could exert any influence with them to the Savior and to heaven. Such congregations truly are "the light of the world," "the salt of the earth," and as "cities set on a hill." The question therefore is put to rest. We *may* have a constant state of revival in our congregations, and we are surely guilty in the sight of God for not enjoying such a state uninterruptedly. There is deep and awful guilt where a congregation not only permits a genuine revival to die away, but a state of decline, of coldness and deadness to succeed. This is so far from being a necessary consequence of the revival, that it is an awful abuse of the work. It is just as necessary and as much the duty of a whole congregation, to continue in a state of lively active piety at all times, as of an individual christian. And the one case is just as possible as the other. Is it the duty of every christian constantly to "grow in grace, and increase in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior, Jesus

Christ?"—"to keep himself in the love of God?"—"to lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset him, and run with patience the race set before him?"—"to strive to enter in at the strait gate?" Is this the duty of the individual christian, and is it possible for him to perform it? and is not the same true of the whole congregation, since it is composed of individual christians? We suppose no one will contend that it is impossible for an individual christian "to walk with God" as Enoch did; and why then should it be impossible for a number of christians, or a whole congregation to do so? But the argument is conclusive; it is not necessary that we should pursue it any farther. A state of constant revival is both possible and practicable, and every christian ought constantly to aim at it, and labor and pray for it. Would that we could awaken the whole church to the importance of this subject. May God in great mercy send us constant, ever continuing, all conquering revivals throughout the entire American churches, and the world! May the work commence and never cease until millennial glory shall beam upon us, and the triumphant anthem roll over the whole earth: "The kingdoms of this world, have become the kingdoms of the Lord and his Christ!" Amen.

CHAPTER VI.

“NEW MEASURES”—“OLD MEASURES.” MEANS TO
BE EMPLOYED FOR THE PROMOTION OF REVIVALS.

THERE has, for some years, been much useless and injurious controversy in some parts of the church, on the subject of (so called) *old* and *new* measures. This has been true particularly in connection with revivals of religion, and hence claims a brief notice at our hands. Friends and brethren even have in some instances, been estranged, and arrayed themselves in opposing parties under the name of new and old measure men! By some, revivals of religion, and every thing connected with them, have been classed among new measures, and, without further examination, have been unceremoniously opposed and condemned on this ground alone! No matter how many souls are converted, and how great the amount of good accomplished by them, they are *new measures*, and therefore must be opposed! Now is not this a most foolish and sinful course of conduct, deserving the severest and most decided rebukes of all good men? The phrase “new measures” has been employed by such men to signify useless and injurious innovations upon venerable and well established customs and usages: and in their view revivals, and all the means

employed to promote them, are such innovations and foster a spirit of enthusiasm and wild-fire, and hence they suppose they are doing God a service by exerting all their influence against them. We trust we have already proved satisfactorily that this objection is unfounded in truth, and that genuine revivals are the work of God's Holy Spirit, and that opposition to them, is really opposition to God himself; and here we are willing to permit this part of the subject to rest.

On the other hand, it cannot be denied, that some, who styled themselves *new* measure men, have gone to the other extreme. They have as unceremoniously condemned all, and endeavored to stigmatize them as *old* measure men, who did not just agree, and go all lengths with them in their wild notions. By old measure men these persons mean all unconverted, cold-hearted formalists in religion, who have grasped the shadow and missed the substance—who have a name to live but are dead. Hence it has come to pass that some of the most prudent, pious, and worthy men in the church, who hesitated to adopt all that passed for new measures have been called old measure men, that is, unconverted, cold-hearted formalists, who are opposed to the progress of true piety and the spiritual interests of the Redeemer's kingdom! Now it is clear that both these classes of persons are ultra in their views, and that the whole controversy has now turned upon a mutual misunderstanding and misapprehension of the phrase new measures, and hence ought to be immediately abandoned. There

have indeed always been two sorts or classes of persons in the church; viz. the converted and the unconverted, the true christian and the hypocrite, the warm-hearted, active, zealous believer, and the cold, sleeping, dead formalist, the friends and enemies of experimental piety and genuine revivals. But we deny that the distinction of old and new measure men properly designates these two classes. *All* the so-called old measure men are not unconverted and opposed to experimental religion; nor are all who favor what they call new measures the pious, sincere, and devoted disciples of the Master whom they profess to be. Just the contrary is in many cases the truth. Some of the most intelligent, devoted, and active ministers of Christ have been styled old measure men, and others who would almost fight for what they call new measures are undoubtedly hypocrites. We do therefore most positively and decidedly oppose this attempt to divide the church into old and new measure parties. It sets up unjust and unscriptural tests, and causes bickerings, heart-burnings, and divisions which are sinful and injurious. We go farther. We object altogether to the use of the phrases old and new measures, as watch-words in this controversy. They are in the mouth of every person, and they mean—what? An echo answers what. Perhaps no two individuals use them to mean precisely the same thing. Away then with such unmeaning, ambiguous, and strife-creating watch-words from the christian church. We, for ourselves, shall never admit *this* distinction, nor consent to be identified with either of these parties.

Should the question therefore be asked, "are you an old, or a new measure man?" we reply unequivocally, we are neither, and we do not admit the correctness or justice of the distinction. Are we asked again, "are you then in favor of old, or of new measures?" we reply again, we are in favor of *both*, and indeed of all other measures, in so far as they are scriptural and good, and meet with the approbation and blessing of God in the conversion and salvation of souls. In fact we are no stickler for measures at all. Any measures which God approves and blesses suit us. We have one great and glorious object in view, of which we endeavor never to lose sight, and to the accomplishment of this object we seek to make every thing bend. This object is the regeneration and sanctification of souls; the bringing of men from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan unto God. For this solely we wish to labor and pray, strive and toil, and exert every energy of body and mind, and if this grand and glorious object be only accomplished to the utmost possible extent, we care but little by *what means*. We shall never quarrel with any christian about external modes; for we do believe that in all non-essentials—in all forms and ceremonies which are not distinctly defined in the word of God, "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," permits us to do as we please, and as circumstances may dictate. We think the language of every christian ought to be, "I am determined by the grace of God to go to heaven myself, and to take as many others with me, as I possibly can. I am willing to

adopt any wise and good measures to win souls to Christ—willing, in a certain sense to “become all things to all men, if by any means I might gain some.”

If the controversy were about any thing *essential* to the salvation of men—if any prominent doctrine of the Scriptures were involved in the issue, or a *new gospel* were about to be introduced, then it would become our duty “to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints:” but as long as it is about mere non-essential modes and forms, it is surely both a sin and a shame for brethren to fall out by the way, and turn those weapons against each other, which should be employed only against the common enemy. That new discoveries in science should tend to modify our interpretation of parts of the scriptures, and *new* modes and ceremonies should be introduced into the external management of religious institutions and the affairs of the church, is surely neither strange nor remarkable. The world, at the present day, and especially our own country, is full of new inventions, improvements, and innovations of every kind. Every class of society—every department of labor—the arts, sciences, and education are all blessed, or perhaps sometimes *cursed* with them. The march of knowledge and of the human mind is onward, and a thousand new discoveries are made, experiments tried, old systems exploded, and new ones established upon their ruins. Rail-roads, steam-boats, patent inventions, and labor-saving machines, as well as improved systems of philosophy, science, education, and politics, are among the *new* things of the day.

Now it is plain that some of these *new* measures are not better than the old ones; often not as good, and after a short existence have to give way again to them. Yet no man in his senses would oppose every thing which is new, or try to arrest the spirit of inquiry and improvement of which it is indicative. It is evident also that this spirit, so universally pervading the American people, will manifest itself in their religion and religious institutions; nor can you, without the most serious injury to the cause of God, with a blind and superstitious zeal for old fashions and customs, even attempt an indiscriminate opposition. On the contrary, you must take the world as it is; fall in with the spirit of the age; endeavor to discriminate well between the good and the evil; and exert all your influence that the good may prevail and the evil be checked. You dare not attempt to oppose the waves of popular commotion altogether, or they will soon swallow you up; but you must launch out upon them, and taking advantage of every favorable breeze, you must endeavor to direct men in the way they should go. The man therefore who opposes every thing that is new in religion simply *because it is new*, deserves to be greatly pitied for his ignorance and stupidity.

But many of those measures in the management of religious affairs which are called *new*, at the present day, are as old as the church itself. Some call revivals new measures. But we have already shown that they have existed in all ages both of the Jewish and Christian churches. There were scenes of religious

excitement in the days of Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Elijah, Ezra, David, and John, Christ, Peter, Paul, and of Luther, Spener, Wesley, Whitefield, and in our own country, of Edwards, the Tennents, Payson, and thousands of others, which all resembled each other, and may appropriately be called revivals. Some call Sabbath-Schools new measures. And we all know that in their present form they are of comparatively recent origin. Are they any the less useful and important on this account? What is their object? It is the religious education of youth. And is *this* a new measure? Do we not hear good old Moses already giving command in reference to the instruction of children in the doctrines of religion? "All these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Deut. vi. 6—7. The Jews, in their better and more prosperous days, were in fact remarkably diligent and careful in the religious instruction of their youth. And as to the *mode*, the above passage seems to give great latitude; and it is surely both absurd and sinful to quarrel about the mode, be it by the use of old or new measures, if the great object is only successfully accomplished. We also hear the blessed Savior giving the interesting and important command, "Feed my lambs," to the apostle Peter, under the most solemn circumstances, without defining the mode by which he was to do it. Surely under these cir-

cumstances the church is at liberty to adopt any wise and good measures, old or new, if only the lambs of the flock are fed. And what means are better calculated to do this than Sabbath Schools? Does not that man manifest a most shameful degree of ignorance and stupidity who opposes Sabbath-Schools because they are among the new measures of the day?

Some call Bible, Tract, Education and Missionary Societies new measures, and oppose them on this ground. But are they not still the very means which God employs and blesses to the extension of his kingdom over the world, and the salvation of tens of thousands of souls? Is it not by means of these societies that the churches are going into all the world, and preaching the gospel to every creature? These societies in their present organization are *new*; but they are accomplishing the very object for which the kingdom of Christ was established upon earth. Shall we oppose them and tear them to pieces because they are classed among new measures. Temperance societies are new measures. And yet every friend of man must acknowledge that their *object* is good; that they have been instrumental in saving thousands and tens of thousands from the shame, crimes, miseries, grave, and hell of the drunkard. Then why oppose them? O because they are new measures! But Paul in his day already declares, "It is good neither to eat flesh, NOR TO DRINK WINE, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." Rom. xiv. 21. But in our day the drinking of wine, or any other intoxi-

cating liquor, is the means by which thousands upon thousands of our brethren are made to *stumble*, to become *offended*, and *weak*; are we not then bound by every tie of humanity and love for their bodies and souls to abstain entirely from the use of that which does them this great injury? Otherwise are we not instrumental by our example in leading them to do that by which their bodies are killed, and their souls damned? O what multitudes stumble, become offended, and are made weak by the example of professed christians even! How such persons "let their light shine before men!" Alas! their light is all darkness; but they are opposed to new measures, and therefore must oppose the Temperance cause!!

But no doubt some of our readers will be impatient to hear *what means we recommend to be employed for the promotion of revivals*, and then they will know whether to approve or condemn us. Well, we shall be very candid; and yet we are not certain that we have any thing that is at all *new* to propose on the subject.

1. But the first means to be employed for the promotion of genuine revivals of religion, *is the constant plain, practical and faithful preaching of the gospel*. This is emphatically **THE** grand means which God himself has appointed for the conversion of the world. No other institution or means; which is calculated to supplant or supersede this, can prosper or be innocently employed. Prominence must ever be given to this institution, and if faithfully employed, God will always own and bless it to the salvation of men. But in

order to this the preaching must ever be of the right kind. The preacher must himself be a truly converted and a deeply pious man. God never called an unconverted man into the ministry. Thousands of such have rushed into it uncalled, but it was against the will of God. He that would lead sinners to Christ must have experienced the power of vital godliness in his own soul, and been made experimentally acquainted with the way of salvation through a crucified Redeemer. The sacred fire of divine love must have been kindled in his own soul by the Holy Ghost, and by much prayer and communion with God, must be kept constantly and vigorously burning. If this qualification be wanting, he must be a "blind leader of the blind." All other attainments are comparatively useless without this. Still it is not the *only* qualification—many others are indispensable to the greatest success, and it is no part of our plan to discuss them here—but deep personal piety is the first, the greatest, and the most important.

Such is the revival preacher. *How must he preach?* From the heart, "as a dying man to dying men," in view of the great judgment day. He must "preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." 2 Tim. iv. 2. He must preach "the word," the whole word, and nothing but the word of God. The *gospel*; not rhetoric, philosophy, and moral essays—not incomprehensible metaphysics, or scholastic subtleties—not "foolish questions," and angry controversies—not human creeds and sectarian dog-

mas—not cold, lifeless, heartless homilies; but the *gospel*, warm, pure, and holy as it came from heaven—Jesus Christ and him crucified as the centre and substance of the law and the gospel; as the sum of the whole system of divine truth. All his subjects must be radiant with the glory which beams from the cross, and then he can scarcely fail to win souls—then his “thoughts will glow, and his words will burn,” and sinners will be converted. He must preach *constantly*; “in season, out of season:” seize favorable times and opportunities, if they present themselves; if not, take unfavorable ones. Preach you must, and that constantly. Let not your efforts be *divided* among half a dozen or more congregations, but concentrate them, if possible, upon one or two. Preach constantly; on the Sabbath and in the week; in the pulpit and from house to house, by precept and example. Preach *plainly* and simply, so that you are sure those of least capacity understand you, and then you will not fail to instruct and edify all. Preach *practical* sermons; not cold, long, dry, soul-starving doctrinal discussions on the one hand; nor mere ranting declamation, and foaming, furious, fiery exhortation, without substance or sense, on the other: but the deep and solid truths of the Bible, the marrow of the gospel in a practical manner. Instruct and enlighten the understanding and convince the intellect, and then touch, electrify the passions, and thus irresistibly move the heart. Dip the arrows of your quiver in the blood of the Lamb, and then take sure aim, and beseeching God for the influence of the Spirit, you

will preach with demonstration and power. Preach *faithfully*. Keep back no part of the truth from fear, favor, or regard to men's opinions. Preach the law and the gospel just as they are—add nothing, subtract nothing. Cast no part into the shade through your preference for another, or by presenting one side or subject to the neglect of another of equal or greater importance. Do not smooth down the bold and prominent features of the word, or blunt the edge of “the sword of the Spirit” by the oil of rhetoric, or the tinsel and ornament of imagination; and on the contrary, make no rough places where the gospel is smooth. In a word, always remember that you stand between Almighty God and never-dying souls, and are his mouth to men, and so preach each sermon, as if it were your last before meeting your hearers at the judgment bar. Thus preach, and souls will be converted, sanctified, and saved. Such is *revival* preaching, and it cannot fail, by the power of that Spirit, which ever accompanies God's word faithfully administered, to promote genuine revivals.

2. *Protracted meetings* have been eminently blessed to the promotion of genuine revivals. The Pastor and the officers of his congregation agree upon a time when they will set apart a few days, or a whole week or more, as a season of special prayer, preaching, and effort for the conversion of sinners and the salvation of souls. Several neighboring clergymen are invited to assist. The time appointed arrives, and the meeting is commenced, and several sermons a day are preached, prayer-meetings and other exercises

held during its continuance. The seed sown is copiously watered by the prayers of believers. Christians are exhorted to dedicate themselves anew to the Lord, to aim at higher attainments in the divine life, to be more fervent and importunate in prayer, and to make renewed and more zealous efforts for the immediate conversion of souls. Backsliders are warned of their danger, and earnestly entreated to return to their forsaken God; and impenitent sinners are solemnly urged to flee from the wrath to come, and *immediately* to accept the offers of mercy made them through Jesus Christ. Such meetings properly conducted, never fail to be highly useful to the members of the congregation in which they are held, and in many instances are followed by glorious revivals of religion. And why should it not be so? Here are used the very means which God himself has appointed and promised to bless: prayer, preaching of the word, and individual effort. The meetings are so frequently held, that good impressions produced by one sermon have not time to be effaced or to die away until they are followed up and deepened by another. The sinner who has succeeded in stifling his convictions, and grieving away the Spirit of God for a long time, when he heard a sermon only once a week, or once in several weeks, has not time given him now to do this work of death to his own soul. If he can be induced to attend the meetings and give attention to the word, he almost involuntarily becomes an awakened, seeking, anxious inquirer, and is led to the foot of the cross to sue for pardon and salvation.

We have however several more specific suggestions to offer on the subject of protracted meetings to which we invite attention.

In the first place *the way must be well prepared* in the congregation in which the meeting is to be held, if success is to attend the effort. On this subject we may adopt the language of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, and say to the people who are about to hold a protracted meeting, very emphatically, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." Matt. iii. 3. The way had to be prepared for the coming of the Lord then, and it must be prepared for his coming in our hearts and congregations now. Let no congregation suppose that God will send them success in a protracted meeting, if they do not prepare the way: they must wake up to their duty.

We shall no doubt be asked *what kind* of preparation is necessary, and *how* it is to be made? We reply, first, there is an *external* or worldly preparation necessary. The members of the congregation must so arrange their temporal affairs, their worldly business, that they can attend the meetings, and give their influence and assistance. They should also endeavor to induce their families, relatives, friends and neighbors to attend, so that the house of God may be filled with attentive hearers of the word. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;" but how can men hear, if they are not present when the gospel is preached? It is of no use to hold a protracted meeting in a congregation unless the members themselves attend, and exert themselves to induce all

others, over whom they have any influence, to attend also. Still more, persons must not only attend the meetings, but also, as much as possible, withdraw their *attention* from their worldly cares during the continuance of the meeting. A man may suspend his actual labors and employment, and still his mind may be so harassed and perplexed by worldly cares, that he can give but little attention to the subject of religion. The hours appointed for the meeting should be considered *consecrated*, holy time, which is scrupulously devoted to God and his service.

Again, there is a preparation of *heart* necessary among the members of the congregation. They must not only properly arrange their worldly affairs, and lay aside their cares and anxieties, but they must also carefully examine into their own spiritual condition. Every member should ask himself such questions as these: "Is it well with my soul? Am I growing in grace, and advancing in the divine life, as I should? Have I lived as near to my Lord and Savior, and enjoyed as much happiness in communion with him, as I might have done? Am I as much concerned for the salvation of precious souls, and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom as I should be? Am I really answering the end of my being, and accomplishing the work for which God sent me into the world?" A candid and serious self-examination of this kind, with devout prayer for the illumination of the Holy Ghost, will not fail to discover to each member his true condition in the sight of God. It will point out to him his remaining sins and short-comings, produce

humility and contrition of soul, and lead him to confess his sins to God and implore pardon, and to dedicate himself anew to his service. He will see and feel the necessity of a revival in his own soul, and his earnest prayer will be, "O Lord revive thy work in my soul, and in the hearts of thy people:" Such a preparation of heart among the members of a congregation generally is itself a revival, and will soon extend also to sinners.

Further; *the real state of piety* in the congregation and neighborhood must also be inquired into by the pastor and his people, so that the *desirableness* and *necessity* of a revival may be seen and felt. Christians should remember that they are "The salt of the earth"—"The light of the world"—"A city set upon a hill, which cannot be hid!" Hence the light of every congregation should so shine, that the world, seeing their good works, may be led to glorify our Father who is in heaven. How can this be the case when all is cold, formal and dead in the church?—When there scarcely seems to be a vestige of vital godliness remaining? Often is the religion of the Savior discredited, wickedness and infidelity increased, and the congregation becomes a curse rather than a blessing to the community by its long continuance in such a sad state of decline. The members have not exhibited the power, beauty, and fruits of true piety in their lives, and hence have belied their religion before the world. Now here the standard must be raised, formal professors wakened up, and an effort made to bring the church back to the state in which

it ought to be. But this cannot be done until its real condition is understood and made known. Nor should this examination be confined to the church. Christians should look beyond it, and inquire into the spiritual condition of their families, and their neighborhood. They should remember the value of precious souls, and that none can be saved without repentance and faith—that the present is their only day of grace, and that if it passes by unimproved, they must perish forever!—They should remember that an awful responsibility rests upon them, and that God will require the blood of souls at their hands, which perish through their neglect. Such an inquiry into the state of piety in a congregation and neighborhood will show the *necessity* of a revival, and of renewed efforts for the salvation of men. It will create a strong *desire* for a work of grace, and lead to fervent prayer, and active zealous labors that during the meeting the means may be owned and blessed, and the Spirit of God copiously poured out upon the people.—The way must also be prepared by much fervent, importunate, believing *prayer*. Prayer is the grand means appointed to obtain the blessing of the Holy Spirit. When God was about to revive Israel and restore them to a state of prosperity and happiness, after their return from captivity, he used this language; “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you an

heart of flesh." God declares that HE will do this, that it is HIS work, and further adds, "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." Ez. xxvi. 25, 26, 37.—As if he had said, the great work of restoring you, and making you a better and more pious people belongs to ME—I alone can do it; but you must desire it and pray for it: "I will yet be INQUIRED of by you to do it for you!" This ever has been, and still is God's plan. Christians must remember this. Revival work is God's work, but he will not do it, without the proper and faithful use of the appointed means, and especially prayer, by his people. Hence also the Savior has said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. * * If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." Luke xi. 9, 10, 13. O what fervent believing prayer there should be among the members of a congregation in which a protracted meeting is about to be held! They need not expect a revival without this.

Again; *the preaching* at a protracted meeting must be of the *right kind* if a genuine revival is to be the result. It must be *timely*, suited to the capacities and wants of the people, and the occasion and circumstances of the case. Ministers upon such occasions need, in a very especial manner, that wisdom which

cometh from above, that they may know what and how to preach—that they may be wise to win souls. They should be made acquainted with the character and condition of the people, and select their subjects and present the truth accordingly. *Their own hearts must be prepared and be fully in the work.* If such preparations, as we have described, have been made in the congregation, and the holy fire has already been kindled and commenced to burn among the people, there must be a corresponding preparation in the hearts of the preachers who attend and conduct the meetings. At the commencement of the meeting the *members* of the church, professed christians, should be particularly addressed; *because the revival must commence among them.* It is absurd to suppose that the work should begin among sinners, while christians are all asleep. Hence the first object should be to arouse professors to diligent self-examination, earnest prayer, renewed dedication of themselves to God, and zealous efforts for the conversion of souls. In short the first two or three sermons should aim at producing the preparation above described; for notwithstanding its obvious importance and necessity, there are always some in every congregation, who will neglect it until the commencement of the meeting.

After this the preaching must be directed also to the unconverted, and must be of an awakening, convincing character. It must be eminently *revival preaching*; such as we have already described. The minister ought to insist upon the eternal importance of immediate repentance and submission to God; but

not without showing men, as intelligent creatures, the reasonableness and necessity of the duty. Every false excuse and refuge of lies must be swept away from the sinner, and his guilt and danger must be set before him. Ministers must give themselves wholly to the work during the meeting. We have sometimes been at protracted meetings, where the intervals between the stated hours for worship were so much occupied by light and trifling conversation among the clergymen present as to leave them neither time nor inclination for meditation or private prayer, and consequently to unfit them entirely for the discharge of their duties. This is certainly highly sinful in the sight of God, and must have a most injurious effect upon the meeting. Much more might be said as to the manner of conducting protracted meetings, but we do not wish to be tedious. The hints here thrown out will have their desired effect if carefully pondered, in leading persons to *reflect* upon the subject.

3. *Catechetical Instructions* are eminently calculated to promote genuine revivals.—The object of these instructions is not, as many very erroneously imagine, merely to impart knowledge, teach the doctrines of the catechism and the church, and thus in a sort of mechanical way, to make church members; but it is to awaken and convert sinners and bring them to Jesus Christ. That some unconverted ministers have abused this blessed and venerable institution, making it a kind of machine to add members as unconverted as themselves to their congregations, cannot be denied; but this surely is no valid objection to the institution itself.

It only proves that this, like almost every other good thing, may be misapplied and abused. Some unconverted men have preached the gospel and administered all the ordinances of the church from improper motives—have misapplied the most sacred institutions of religion to purposes of self-aggrandizement; but we do not condemn religion and its ordinances for this abuse. So catechetical instructions are good, and in the hands of evangelical and pious ministers have been the means of the conversion of thousands and tens of thousands of souls. The writer is acquainted with men, living and dead, who, during the course of a long and laborious ministry, usually instructed several classes of catechumens every year, and almost always had a revival of more or less extent, (though probably not called by this name,) when these persons were added to the church. These men made the catechetical lecture room, a room of prayer, inquiry, and a very *bethel* to the souls of those attending. Their instructions were solid, thorough, and practical, and delivered with a sincerity, point, and application which could not fail to make lasting impressions. Their immediate object was the thorough conversion of those attending the lectures. These pastors do not confine themselves to the questions of the catechism, but enter into familiar conversations with the catechumens upon the subject of a change of heart and experimental piety in general, and thus make their meetings a sort of inquiry or class meetings, which can scarcely fail to produce the most happy results.

The writer feels it his duty to record faithfully his

own testimony in favor of catechetical lectures. His own experience is, that during the course of his ministry, more souls have been converted in connection with these lectures and as the result of them, than in any other department of his labors. He has enjoyed a number of revivals, more or less extensive under his ministry, and the majority of them have commenced among his catechumens, and been the immediate result of these lectures. And we know this to be the experience of many of the most efficient and successful ministers of Christ who have pursued this plan.

We do not pretend to say that these instructions, even when most faithful, will in every individual case result in the conversion of those who attend them. No, there will always be some, as there are under the most faithful preaching of the gospel, in the class-meeting, and in every revival, who will pass through the whole course unconverted. But even among such, experience has shown, that when the instructions have been faithful, in a majority of cases the foundation is laid for their future conversion. The seed has been sown, has taken deep root, and though it may lie dormant for years, it will at last spring up and bear fruit to the glory of God.

There is another remark to be made in reference to these instructions. It is this, that the cases of conversion which result from them are always more genuine and thorough. It cannot be mere animal excitement with those who have been made well acquainted with the doctrines of the Bible by catechising. They are well grounded in the truth, and

therefore know what they are doing. When they become awakened and anxious about their souls, it is not from mere fright or sympathy, but it is from a deep and rational conviction of their sinfulness and danger, produced by the Spirit of God in the application of the truth which they have learned. There are much fewer cases of spurious excitement, and consequently of falling away afterwards among such persons, than among those who have had no such instructions. They more usually remain firm, and become active, zealous, and enlightened christians, and ornaments, often pillars, in the church of Christ.—No pastor therefore who is anxious to promote genuine revivals ought to neglect so important and blessed a means. We exceedingly regret that, in these latter days, some men, who wish to be regarded as amongst the foremost in advocating and promoting revivals, have manifested a disposition to set aside and neglect catechetical instructions. We admire the zeal of many such brethren, but cannot think that it is according to knowledge. These lectures may be an *old measure* in their opinion, but they are one of those measures, which, in faithful hands, *improves* by age. It is the glory of those churches in which it has been properly employed. We hesitate not to say that the pastor who is zealous and faithful in his catechetical instructions, may, under the ordinary blessing of God, expect a genuine revival, whenever he prepares a class for confirmation.

4. *Sunday Schools* are another means for promoting genuine revivals closely allied to catechetical instruc-

tions. The utility and great importance of these institutions are now so extensively felt and so generally appreciated, that it may seem superfluous to say any thing in vindication of them. It is believed that their influence upon the American churches, and through them upon the world, is at this day more powerful and extensive than that of any other instrumentality employed by them.

Yet while this seems to be generally seen and acknowledged, we are under the impression that the immediate and powerful agency of Sunday Schools in promoting genuine revivals has not been so fully appreciated. Christians have believed that the good seed of gospel truth sown in the youthful mind in the sabbath school would produce fruit at *some future time*; but in many, perhaps we ought to say, in a great majority of instances, they seem to have failed to expect, labor, and pray for *immediate* results in the conversion of the children. And yet what is the history of revivals in connection with sunday schools? It is that many of the most extensive and powerful commenced in sabbath-schools, and frequently a large number of the subjects, sometimes nearly all of them, were or had been sabbath scholars. We can add our testimony here, that especially in one of the most extensive and blessed revivals which God ever sent us, nearly *all* the teachers, and a number of the larger scholars in the sunday school were subjects.

Indeed sabbath-school instructions, if properly and faithfully given, are the very means to prepare the way for a revival? and we hesitate not to remark,

without fear of successful contradiction, that a careful examination would show, that the multitudes of revivals, which have blessed the American churches for a number of years past, might be traced, among other means, to the influence of sabbath schools. Then may we look for a *constant* state of revival in the churches, when sabbath school instructions have become so universal and faithful, that all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest—when these instructions shall be given with the design, the earnest expectation, the fervent prayer that they may result in the conversion of those to whom they are given.

5. The circulation of *Tracts* and *Books* on practical piety has also been found a blessed means to promote genuine revivals. A time of revival is always a time of *inquiry* among the people. Almost all persons become anxious to hear and read on religious subjects; and if the *truth* is not within their reach, they will lay hold of error. Old and young, saint and sinner, the devoted christian and the formalist, the backslider, the hypocrite the awakened soul, and the young convert, all want instruction, and will read then what they would not at any other time. Consequently it becomes our sacred duty not only to furnish proper and faithful instructions from the pulpit, but also books and tracts which can be read in the retirement of the domestic circle and the closet.

Do we find it necessary and important, in times of revival, to call in the aid of neighboring clergymen?—by means of tracts and books we can obtain the assistance of many of the ablest and best men that ever

lived. For their best and most powerful efforts were put forth in the production of those books which they have left behind, and by which, "being dead, they yet speak!" Here we can call upon the venerable Arndt to come to our help in the German language, and in his "True Christianity" he will tell every sincere inquirer what true religion is, and how it is to be obtained. We can ask Baxter, in his serious and solemn manner, to "Call" upon the unconverted and urge them to flee from the wrath to come, and Alleine to sound his tremendous "Alarm" in their slumbering ears. Doddridge can be called in to explain to us the "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul;" Bunyan to show us the "Pilgrims Progress" from the city of destruction, through difficulties, dangers, and trials, to heaven and eternal happiness; and Baxter to unfold to our astonished views, "The Saint's Everlasting Rest." Pike can be invited to "Persuade to Early Piety," and "Guide young Disciples;" James to direct the "Anxious Inquirer;" and Abbot to lead on the "Young Christian." O what a host of revival preachers, some living and some dead, we can thus summon to our aid! And these preachers will *remain* with us constantly, will visit our lanes and alleys, high ways and hedges, our family circles and our closets. They are always upon the spot, and in moments of sober reflection, calm reason, and devout meditation can most successfully preach the word. O what errors they can correct, what doubts remove, what consolation impart? Who would not avail himself of such valuable assistance in the promotion of genuine

revivals? The above, and many other invaluable works, are published by that noble institution, the "American Tract Society," and systematic efforts are now made to distribute them by thousands and tens of thousands throughout the entire United States.

6. *Social Prayer-Meetings* are indispensable to the promotion and keeping up of genuine revivals. The first great revival that God ever sent upon the Christian Church, and which resulted in the conversion of three thousand souls in one day, and the firm establishment of that church, commenced in a *prayer-meeting*. We need scarcely add that we refer to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the day of Pentecost. We are distinctly informed that the hundred and twenty disciples continued in prayer and supplication in their upper room at Jerusalem from day to day until they received the promised blessing. Yea, they were actually engaged, with one accord, in this social prayer meeting, when the Spirit was sent down upon them. Indeed we believe, that there cannot be a revival, without prayer-meetings. A genuine revival will convert the assembled congregation into a prayer-meeting. If professed christians will not pray at such times, awakened sinners will, and will commence prayer-meetings too. They are the very atmosphere of revivals. It is in these meetings, that persons make known their wants to God, unburden their cares, confess their sins, and implore pardon. It is here that they feel at home, and approach into the very audience chamber of the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

Prayer-meetings are especially important in *keeping up* a revival. They keep alive the flame of true piety in the hearts of christians; strengthen the weak; establish the doubting; direct the inquiring; comfort the mourner; succor the tempted; and tend eminently to keep all near to their Savior. The awakened sinner will almost instinctively resort to the prayer-meeting. There is no danger that a genuine work of grace will ever cease in a congregation, as long as the prayer-meetings are regularly, zealously, and faithfully kept up several times a week. No sad decline, or dreadful reaction will ever be seen or felt as long as this is done. Very few cases of falling away or backsliding will ever occur among those who regularly attend the prayer-meetings.

There ought to be at least *three* prayer-meetings a week in every christian congregation;—one *male*, one *female*, and one *general* prayer-meeting. Let the general meeting be held, say, on Wednesday evening, and then let *all* attend and join devoutly in all the exercises;—let the *Pastor* conduct this meeting; first delivering a short practical lecture, and then calling upon a number of the brethren, to lead in prayer. Let him vary his subjects from time to time, and always come so prepared in head and heart, that by the grace of God, he may always be able to present something to instruct, to interest, to profit and build up his people. Dont let him come unprepared week after week to make a few common place remarks, or he will soon put an end to the most interesting revival, rock his people all soundly and comfortably to sleep, and thin out, or entirely break up his meetings.

The *male prayer-meeting* can be held on some evening in the week, or if that be inconvenient, on Sunday morning before church. Let this meeting be held in the Lecture room, or in some private house. Let the members of the church council, and all the male members, old and young, who possibly can, attend this meeting. Dont expect or ask the Pastor to attend it, unless he chooses to do so; and when he is present-dont put upon him the labor of *conducting* the meeting, unless he wishes to do it. Let some five or six of the most pious and experienced men in the congregation be appointed to conduct these meetings alternately. Let the exercises be singing, prayer, reading a portion of Scripture, and if practicable one or more *very short* exhortations. Let brotherly love and Christian fellowship be the governing principle in these meetings. Let all seek to “bear each other’s burdens,” and build each other up in the christian life. Let it be the earnest and prayerful effort of each-member to contribute all in his power to make the meetings interesting and profitable to all who attend them. If any brother becomes cold, back-slides, or is overtaken in a fault let the others do all in their power to reclaim and restore him in the spirit of kindness and love—converse with him, pray with him, and beseech him for God’s sake to return immediately. Is any one sick, afflicted, or in distress; let the rest visit him, and seek to administer to his wants. Let all attending this meeting be eminently *a band of brethren*, in whom there is no guile. Let each one try to get all the male members of the congregation

into this prayer meeting; or if this would make the meeting too large, let two or more of exactly the same character be formed in the congregation; one among the *old*, and another among the *young* men. Whenever an individual is awakened under the preaching of the pastor, or by any other means, let him, if possible, and as soon as possible be added to this praying band. Let those of most experience visit him, converse and pray with him, and seek to induce him to attend the prayer-meeting. Other exercises, such as relating personal experience, might occasionally be introduced into these meetings with very good effect, if *carefully* and *judiciously* done. Yet experience seems to teach that this should not be an ordinary feature of the meetings. Personal experience often told becomes uninteresting, if it does not degenerate into egotism and hypocrisy. But if occasionally one and another of the members of the prayer meeting has experience of any special interest, it may assist greatly to strengthen and confirm others, if carefully and judiciously related.

The same reasons that should induce every congregation to form such a male prayer-meeting as we have now endeavored to describe, should induce them to form one of precisely the same kind among the *female* members. They *need* it just as much, and their influence upon the congregation for good or evil is just as great. The *female prayer-meeting* ought, for obvious reasons, to be held, not in the *evening*, but in the day time: on some *afternoon* in the week. Let all the pious females in the congregation meet to-

gether in the lecture room, or in some private house and form themselves into a social prayer-meeting. Let no *male* member at all be present—not even their pastor, unless it be at first to organize their meeting, or afterwards by their unanimous request. They will feel under less restraint, and have more freedom in prayer when he is not at their meeting. Let a number be appointed by mutual consent to conduct the meeting alternately; and let the exercises be singing, prayer, and reading a portion of God's word. Let all malice, pride, hypocrisy, evil speaking, and distinction of rank or condition be laid aside and forgotten here; and let them meet as a band of christian sisters, given to the Lord and his service. They must forget each other's faults, bear each other's burdens, and meet to build each other up in the Lord. Their meetings must be private, and never be made the subject of conversation afterwards. Let no long-tongued, mischief-making gossip be found among the number. If there be one who cannot bridle her tongue, let her be unanimously voted out of the meeting. Let it be the determination of each member to contribute her part to make every meeting interesting and profitable. Let every awakened sinner, or new convert among the females of the congregation be united to this praying band of sisters as soon as possible; and let every thing in their power be done for the good of souls, the welfare of their congregation, and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. Tract distribution and visitation, and other benevolent christian efforts might be united with this meeting.

With regard to these prayer-meetings we have yet to remark in general, "that all things must be done decently and in order." They should be held once a week and at such time and place as is most convenient for all who attend them. The exercises should always be full of life and interest, truly spiritual and devout; but never noisy, or marred by extravagance or disorder. Let there be no long, drawling, prayers, cold enough to freeze up every avenue of the soul, and quench every spark of true piety. Let the prayers *be short*, spiritual, and devout. No matter how broken the language, or unconnected the petitions, if they only come from the heart, they are heard in heaven. Let all remember that

"Pray'r is the soul's sincere desire,
Utter'd or unexpress'd,
The motion of a hidden fire,
That trembles in the breast.

Pray'r is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is near.

Pray'r is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try;
Pray'r the sublimest strains that reach
The Majesty on high."

The reason why these male and female prayer-meetings should be held separately and privately are obvious, and will occur to every reflecting mind. They are to be eminently *social* meetings, and consequently the less restraint, and the more freedom each member feels, the more interesting will they be. And

if they are properly conducted, their influence upon the piety of the congregation will be extensive and powerful. It is scarcely possible that a congregation can ever decline into a state of coldness and formality, in which such prayer-meetings are established and kept up regularly and faithfully. We know their good effects by experience, and so indispensable do we regard them to the success of the ministry, and the progress of vital piety, that we never could consent to become the pastor of any people, who were unwilling that they should be established among them.

With regard to the means for promoting revivals now enumerated, we have only one concluding remark to make; namely, that they afford work for *lay-members* of the church, as well as for ministers. At the Protracted Meeting, in the Sunday-School, in the circulation of Tracts and Books, and in the Prayer-meeting, the *members* of each congregation, male and female, have an important and indispensable part to perform. The three latter departments of labor belong nearly entirely to them. And the fact is, that no congregation can ever prosper, no matter how pious, devoted, active, and zealous the Pastor is, unless he can also get his members to work. His efforts, however self-denying and energetic, will be almost in vain so long as his people are all asleep. Every christian, minister and layman, must be a *working* man. The Church of Christ is a *vineyard*, and all who become members of it, are hired as *laborers* into it. To every lazy, idle member of the church, we would say in the language of the Bible, "Go to

the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep, so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man." Prov. vi. 6—11. A congregation may be compared to a hive of bees in which all work except the *drones*, and at certain seasons they must be killed and thrown out as an incumbrance. Every *drone* ought to be thrown out of the congregation. Every such dead branch must be cut off from the living tree, or the infection will extend to other branches, and presently the whole tree will wither and die.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW TO CONDUCT REVIVALS.

THE means to be employed for the promotion of revivals, enumerated in the last chapter, are *general* in their character, and ought, with the single exception of Protracted Meetings, to be *constantly* and faithfully used. We shall now consider briefly some of those *extra* or *special* efforts which God has blessed in *producing* genuine revivals, and add a few general directions as to the manner of *conducting* a revival, when it has commenced, so as to make the work most pure, extensive, lasting, and beneficial in its results.

The principal of those extra or special means is *protracted meetings*, and as we have already spoken of them, we shall now merely inquire,

1. *When it is most proper to appoint such a meeting in a congregation?* And here we shall avail ourselves of some valuable suggestions contained in a pamphlet, entitled, "Directions and Advice in reference to Revivals of Religion and Prayer-Meetings" by the Rev. J. C. Guldin, of the German Reformed Church. He says, "In setting apart such seasons, ministers and churches should consider:

1. The most *suitable time* and *favorable circumstances* of the people, among whom a revival is desired; so as to secure the most general attendance."

This is an obvious and very important direction. There is a time for all things; and it would manifest a great want of judgment to appoint a protracted meeting in the midst of *harvest*, for instance, or any other very busy season, when it would be impossible for the people to attend.

2. "When there are *special indications of the presence of the Spirit of God*, the Church should unite their agency with his in promoting the work. So we act in the kingdom of nature: when the rain falls and softens the fallow ground, we plough. In the kingdom of grace, we are co-workers with God, as in the kingdom of nature. When God works, we should work." Revivals commence in many different ways, besides in protracted meetings. Sometimes they begin in the prayer-meeting, the sunday school, or the catechetical class; sometimes under the ordinary labors of the pastors, or from some providence of God in the sickness and death of an individual or other affliction. Sometimes one or more individuals become awakened, when no special cause can be discovered, and then the work extends to others. It is the sacred duty of the Church carefully to watch all these indications of God's providence, and to follow them up by proper efforts for the good of souls.

3. "When the Church in general have become cold; but when, at the same time, individual members feel deeply concerned for the low state of *Zion*, and travail in birth for souls." When some pour forth their complaints like Jeremiah ix. 1. "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that

I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people !”

4. When a spirit of prayer is felt and noticed among the members of the church ; these things clearly indicate the special presence of God, and warrant a special effort.”

The question may perhaps still be asked, *How often should protracted meetings be held, and how long should they be continued?* The above observations make this general answer evident:—This depends upon the circumstances of the case. Some denominations of Christians, as the Methodists, are in the habit of holding regular *quarterly* meetings of several days continuance, which, when properly conducted, have always resulted in great good. The Lutherans have long been in the habit of holding a meeting of two or three day’s continuance at every communion season, which, in some congregations, were held *twice*, and in others *three* or *four* times a year. And when persons were to be *confirmed*, it has been customary to hold a meeting with them *once* every day for a week or more immediately before the communion season. These meetings, faithfully and judiciously conducted, cannot fail to be eminently useful. After all we repeat, the frequency and duration of protracted meetings must depend upon circumstances. During the *progress* of a revival, meetings for preaching and prayer must be held often enough to afford the people the necessary instruction and encouragement to *keep up the work constantly* ; but this can be done by the pastor and members themselves without special assistance or effort.

II. "*Directions during the commencement and progress of a revival.*"

1. Minister and church should be *wholly devoted* to the work of the Lord. Matt. vi. 33, 2 Cor. viii. 5.

2. The church should assist the minister by every means in their power, as by visiting, persuading those around them to attend the public service, and by sustaining the prayer meetings.

3. Ministers and people should live very near to God in their closets.

4. They must be willing to make every needed *sacrifice*, both of *time* and *property*, to carry on the revival. Read 2 Chron. xxx. 24. Also 1 Chron. xxi. 23, 24.

5. If there is any thing wrong in the church, it should be corrected; if the members have any thing against each other, they should first meet and confess their faults one to another. Read James v. 16, Matt. v. 23—25. There must be a kind, yielding spirit towards each other, mutual forbearance and forgiveness. Rom. xii. 10, Eph. iv. 30—32.

6. It is good for the brethren and sisters to agree among themselves to set apart special seasons for fasting and prayer during the progress of a revival.

7. If a revival be in the church of one denomination, and conducted by that denomination, members of other denominations should never try to introduce into it their *peculiarities* or their *particular mode* of action upon such occasions. While another denomination of christians have a work of grace among them, God has given it into their care, and we should cordially, when

we can be present, enter with them into the spirit of the work, and pray for it; but it should be a *part of our religion* not to push our *mode of managing a revival* among them. Nor will humble and meek persons do this. We have seen much evil grow out of such conduct; especially when there is connected with it an evident purpose of influencing and proselyting the converts over to their party. Such persons had a thousand times better stay away.

8. Never call on more than *one* or *two* ministers to assist in a protracted effort. One or two faithful ministers can present truth enough. When there are more, it is calculated to keep up *novelty*, which is sure to injure the work."

III. *Conducting Meetings.*

1. *Avoid all extravagance.* To every sincere friend of true piety and genuine revivals it must be a subject of the most anxious solicitude, that every work of divine grace should be as *pure, extensive, and lasting* as possible: and as every kind of extravagance must inevitably injure the work in all these respects, he watches, prays, and makes every proper exertion that every thing of the kind may be avoided. *What is the reason that so many of our revivals have been of such short duration*, is a question of great importance? We think we have shown satisfactorily in a former chapter, not only that they may be of much longer duration, but that *constant* revivals are possible. Why then is it, that in so many instances they have continued only for a few weeks? Shall we be told, that though *constant* revivals are possible and obligatory,

they will never be attained or enjoyed this side of the millenium? To our mind this is a very unsatisfactory reply, even if true. We have some difficulty to understand how a desirable attainment may be possible, and obligatory, and yet never actually reached! We think we have proven that constant revivals are possible and obligatory, and the question returns, why may they not be enjoyed by the church? We reply, the reason why they have not been enjoyed more frequently, is, first, because of the faithlessness of christians, and secondly, because of the extravagances that have so often been connected with them. If christians do not *believe* that a revival state may be constantly kept up in a congregation, how can they pray and labor for it? "According to thy *faith* be it unto thee," is the emphatic language that may be addressed to all such. But the other grand reason, and which we wish particularly to present here, is, that during revivals matters have too frequently been carried to *extremes*. Now no extreme can last long; it will almost invariably recoil upon itself with a tremendous reaction. Hence if you would enjoy constant revivals you must most carefully and prayerfully avoid all extravagance,—all extremes in conducting your meetings.—We shall no doubt be asked what we mean by the terms *extravagance* and *extremes* in connection with revivals? We answer, that we mean just what these words in such a connection most naturally signify. To hold the meetings *too often* at the beginning of a revival is such an 'extravagance. We have known instances where the meetings were

held almost constantly day and night for several weeks together, so that the people who attended them were obliged to neglect their secular employments and their domestic affairs until every thing was in a state of derangement and disorder. Now is it not self-evident such a state of things cannot possibly continue more than a few weeks? This we call extravagance; and *such* a constant revival would surely be very undesirable. The same objection lies against keeping up meetings *too late* at night, or continuing them *too long* at a time. It is an extravagance, and it cannot last more than ten days or two weeks. It so fatigues and overdoes the bodies and minds of the people as necessarily to superinduce a most fatal reaction in a very short time. Then the revival is at an end, and is often followed by a state of coldness and indifference which is more to be lamented, than the revival was to be rejoiced at. What friend of genuine revivals does not labor and pray that such an evil may be avoided? Would you prevent it? then we say again avoid all extravagance—every extreme in conducting your meetings. Hold them only so often that all who wish to attend them can do so, without any special inconvenience; and never keep them so late, nor continue them so long that the people become fatigued and weary. Rather dismiss them when they are hungering and thirsting for more, than send them away satiated and disgusted never to return again. In a word, manage all your meetings in such a way as to show that you expect and labor and pray that the revival should continue forever.

There are many other extravagances that must be avoided; but as we have introduced the subject in its proper place in a former chapter, we shall not repeat here. One observation, however, we must add:—Let it not be your object in any of your meetings merely to produce an *excitement*. You will have *animal* excitement enough when sinners are awakened and converted, and saints are revived, without any extra efforts to produce it: and remember that just in so far as the animal feelings get the better of the judgment will the genuine work of grace be injured, or destroyed. Let the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth be preached plainly, powerfully, solemnly, just as it is in the word of God, not to produce an excitement, but to convince and convert sinners. Persons often complain that the excitement has become so powerful that they cannot control it! This may be very true; but it is their *own fault*! They did not manage the work properly from the beginning—perhaps labored to produce this very excitement which now they cannot control! When a revival has so far degenerated that it can no longer be controlled, *it ought to stop*, and the sooner the better. It is no longer the work of the Spirit, but a spurious wild fire, which will do incalculable injury.

2. *Be careful to maintain proper silence and order in all your meetings.* “During prayer no one should be heard but the one leading in prayer, unless it be the deep, sometimes unavoidable, groan of the deeply agonized soul. The *habit* of groaning in prayer should be carefully avoided. A meeting to be solemn, must

be silent. In social prayer, we must all join in one petition, or it is not *social* prayer; hence only he who leads in the petition should be heard. It is certain that God needs not our words; but we need the words of the one who leads in prayer that we may join with him. Now, if another prays aloud at the same time, how can I listen to both? Is not this confusion? And if each prays for himself and offers up a distinct petition, does not this amount to secret prayer—does it not cease to be social prayer? (1 Cor. xiv. 33.) I have known persons to follow the one leading in prayer with a voice so loud, or with their continual ‘Amen,’ or “Lord grant it,” that I could not help but suspect that they cared more to be heard by those around them, than by Him who alone can answer prayer. There is often much *self-willed habit* in this. An individual, in a meeting where I was, when she was not suffered to pray aloud, said to another near her, “now I won’t pray at all!” During preaching, singing, and prayer, there should be solemn silence and order. No running in and out should be suffered. Let all who wish to attend the meetings be present at the hour appointed for opening the exercises, and then stay until they are concluded. We have sometimes seen meetings where persons were continually coming and going, and thus causing an uninterrupted noise and confusion, so as destroy the effect of the best sermon and most solemn exercises. Others would congregate in groups about the doors, or stand up on their feet, and on the pews in the back part of the church, and thus destroy the solemnity and abuse the

house of God. All such conduct is abominable, and will never be suffered in any congregation where "all things are done decently and in order."

3. "Prayers should be *short* and to the *point*. All the prayers recorded in the Bible, all the prayers of the Savior were short. Prayers having the least spirit, and most repetition, are always the longest." During a revival many prayers are offered up for *special* cases and objects; how ridiculous then for the person called upon to lead, to make a prayer fifteen or twenty minutes long, and to pray for every person and thing in the whole universe, but the very object for which he was asked to pray! Pray for the person or blessing for which you were asked to pray and then stop, if your prayer should be but *one* minute long. It is enough, if you are sincere, and offer up your petition in faith in Jesus Christ. God is our *Father* and we come to him as children; but how absurd for the child to ask for a thousand things, when it only wants a piece of bread!

4. Females should never be called upon to lead in the *public promiscuous* assembly. Let them pray silently, and at home, and in meetings composed entirely of their own sex; but we have never yet seen an instance in which we thought it was proper to violate the plain injunction of the apostle, "Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak." 1 Cor. xiv. 34.

IV. *Treatment of the awakened.*

When there is good reason to believe that there are *awakened* persons in the congregation, they should

not be permitted to leave the house until some suitable means are employed to induce them to submit to God immediately. If they are permitted to depart with the careless crowd, there is every reason to fear that they will suppress their convictions and grieve away the Spirit. Hence the minister, or some experienced lay-member should have *personal conversation* with every awakened sinner in the house; and it is manifest that the sooner this is done, after the sermon, the better. It seems to us that this was precisely the method pursued by the inspired apostles. They not only preached the gospel publicly, but when persons were awakened, they instructed them individually, and from house to house. Thus on the day of Pentecost, when the apostle Peter had preached, and several thousand became awakened, and began to inquire, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" they were especially and specifically directed. "Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." How would it have sounded, if Peter had dismissed this immense congregation immediately after his sermon, and sent these anxious inquirers away uninstructed and undirected, saying to them, "Go home and think of these things!" Would it not have been like saying to the hungry, be ye fed, and to the naked, be ye warmed and clothed, without giving them that which they need? And this is just what every minister does who sends away awakened anxious sinners without giving them that personal instruction which

they now so much need and desire. True, he may afterwards visit them at their houses, and there converse with them and direct them to the Lamb of God: and this every faithful pastor will do. But he is not omniscient, and how does he know *who* are awakened and anxious? He has employed no means to ascertain, and how then can he visit them? Besides, he cannot visit them immediately after the sermon, even if he knew who were anxious—a day or a night or more will necessarily elapse before he has time or circumstances will admit of his performing this duty; and during this time Satan will have had an abundant opportunity to gather up the seed of the word, and dissipate all serious impressions. It seems evident to us, therefore, that no pastor can be faithful to the souls of men, or be free from their blood, who does not afford the necessary *personal* instruction to the awakened, and urge them by every consideration to submit to God immediately, before they have had time to suppress their convictions and grieve away the Spirit.

Hence some suitable means must be employed to ascertain *who are awakened* before the congregation is dismissed, and that an opportunity may be afforded the minister to have a personal interview with each one. Various methods have been employed to accomplish this end. One is to vacate several of the front pews, and affectionately and earnestly urge all who are concerned, for their souls to manifest it by coming forward and occupying those pews. Another is to press them to remain, after the congregation is

dismissed; and a third to invite them to the lecture room, or some other convenient place. One measure might answer in one place which would not do so well at another. The conscientious christian cannot be stubbornly tenacious of any external measures. His object is to bring sinners to the Savior and accomplish the greatest amount of good, and to this he makes every thing bend. Our own experience has led us to prefer greatly the plan of inviting the awakened to the front pews immediately after the sermon, and before the congregation is dismissed, to be conversed and prayed with. We have observed, that when the congregation is dismissed, and the awakened invited to retire to the lecture room, but few of those as a general matter, with whom it is most desirable to converse, will attend. The temptation to go away with the crowd is too strong, they cannot resist it: and the very bustle and confusion of the departing crowd is calculated to dissipate their serious impressions. The same objections lie against the plan of asking the anxious to *remain* after the congregation is dismissed. It is very difficult to induce them to do it. Their own evil hearts and Satan will suggest many excuses for them. They are not the persons meant—their convictions are not deep enough—it will do as well at home or at some future time—it cannot be so important or the congregation would not be dismissed—it is getting late and my company will go away and leave me, and I do not wish to go home alone. These and many other excuses will be made; and some of them are not without foundation. The

wife, for instance, is deeply concerned, and feels anxious to be personally instructed and directed, but her husband and family are going home when the congregation is dismissed, and it does not seem proper for her to remain and afterwards go home alone. A young man in the house is seriously impressed, and could be induced to submit; but he came with some young ladies, and as they are going home he cannot remain. Sometimes so many remain, simply waiting for each other, that after all you do not know who are the anxious, and the very object you have in view is defeated. These are serious objections, and in many instances cannot be removed.

Hence vastly the better plan is to invite the awakened to the front pews immediately after the sermon and in presence of the whole congregation. Do not ask them to *kneel* at a "mourner's bench," as it is called, for this is objectionable for several reasons. Kneeling at a bench is a very *uncomfortable* posture, and to be kept in this position for an hour or more at a time is insufferable. Besides, it generally causes confusion. Persons deeply distressed sometimes *throw themselves down* at this bench one upon the other in a manner truly disgusting and altogether unbecoming the house of God. Now all this can be avoided by asking them to *sit* in the front pews, and not to kneel, except in prayer, when the whole congregation kneel. Still more, how can the minister converse with persons kneeling at a bench, and hanging down their heads nearly to the floor! Is not the very object of inviting them out in some measure defeated by this

plan? We are therefore in favor of asking the awakened to sit in the front pews, that it may be known who they are, that they may be conversed and prayed with, and be personally directed to the Savior, and urged to submit immediately and unconditionally.

This plan, as it seems to us, is preferable to all others, for the following reasons. 1. It leaves the awakened sinner *without excuse*. The gospel urges him to submit at once, and here he is invited to do so; and has an opportunity of making known his feelings, and receiving such personal instruction as his situation may require. This invitation is given just when his impressions are deepest, and before he has had time to shake them off. He has no excuse left for not submitting at once.

2. It is soonest and most conveniently done, and gives rise to no confusion and disorder.

3. It enlists the prayers and sympathies of the whole congregation.

4. It has a most salutary influence upon the spectators, if managed with proper solemnity and order. It leads christians to search their own hearts carefully, and anxiously to inquire, whether it is well with their souls; and the unconverted see their former careless companions deciding for God, and they are almost irresistibly drawn to follow their example.

The pious pastor, or other experienced christian must, as a general matter, judge for himself *what* particular instructions and directions to give to an awakened sinner, after having, as nearly as possible, ascertained the state of his mind. Yet probably the

following remarks may not be superfluous in this place :

1. Be careful to distinguish between mere *animal feeling*, and genuine *conviction* of sin. There is a *godly sorrow*, and there is also a sorrow of *this world*. Endeavor to ascertain the *cause* of the individual's sorrow.

2. Never administer *comfort* where there is no *true sorrow* for sin, and no genuine repentance.

3. Address the individual's *judgment* and *understanding*—*reason* with him, and do not encourage him to depend upon his feelings alone.

4. If there is genuine intelligent conviction of sin, *insist upon immediate submission to God*. Dont tell the sinner to “*hold on and persevere until he gets through!*” It is sickening to hear such slang upon so solemn an occasion. Sinners are at enmity with God—they have a controversy with the Almighty—he is right and they are wrong, and hence they should submit at once. Never listen to their excuse that they *cannot* submit—It is not true; they can submit, if they will.

5. Dont tell the anxious that they are not *convicted enough*—You dont know this. The Bible does not tell us *how much* conviction an individual must have. If the sinner is willing to forsake all his sins, and submit to Christ to be saved by him alone, he has conviction enough.

6. Be careful that the anxious do not *depend* upon their sorrows, tears, and prayers, and the exertions of others, as the means to change their hearts. Tell

them that God alone can do this, and will do it only on condition that they submit to him. "Give me thy heart my son" is his affectionate language.

7. In all conversation and prayer with the anxious be mild and tender, yet firm and faithful.

The faithful pastor will also endeavor to visit the anxious at their own houses, to give them necessary instruction and encouragement. If there be too many, and he cannot visit them from house to house, he will hold *anxious meetings* for their special benefit, and will converse with each one personally.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONCLUSION, AND AN APPEAL TO CHRISTIANS IN BEHALF OF REVIVALS.

WE have now given, what we regard a correct and scriptural view of the principal topics connected with revivals of religion, in so far as they fall in with our plan. We have considered the *design* of the church—the *nature* of *true religion*, and of *genuine revivals* both negatively and affirmatively—have endeavored to show that genuine revivals are the work of God's Holy Spirit, and that opposition to them, is really opposition to God himself—that objections to them, where they are well-founded, lie only against their *abuse*. We have also endeavored to show that genuine revivals are the best possible state of the church upon earth—that this is true of the *constant* revival state, and that this state is possible.—We have likewise considered the most important means for promoting revivals, and the best manner of conducting them. In bringing these discussions to a close, it only remains that we should state some of the most important positions which we think we have established, and make an earnest and affectionate appeal to the church to exert every energy to promote true revivals throughout the world in view of their great

and most blessed results. This we propose to do in the present chapter.

We think our discussions in the former chapters have fully established the following important positions:

First; that the grand design of the christian church upon earth is the regeneration and sanctification of souls—that her field of operation is the whole world—and that it is the sacred duty of her ministers and members to rouse every energy and put forth every effort that this glorious design may be accomplished.

Secondly; that that is clearly *the Church's Best State*, in which the greatest number of souls is converted and prepared for heaven. Consequently those are the best and most proper “measures” to be employed, be they “new” or “old,” which God blesses to the salvation of the greatest number of souls, and are therefore most successful in the accomplishment of this design.

Thirdly; that the christian church had her origin in a most extensive and powerful revival, and that genuine revivals have ever been the chosen means of God for the accomplishment of her design—that they have been instrumental in the salvation of the greatest number of souls, and the promotion of the most elevated, active, and evangelical piety, and that therefore they constitute the church's best state.

Fourthly; that genuine revivals are the work of God, and that opposition to them is really opposition to God himself—that though, like every thing else with which man has any thing to do—they are not

perfect, but are liable to abuse; yet that by proper management the evils connected with them may generally be avoided, and that objections made to them, where they have any foundation in truth, lie only against their *abuse*. It is absurd to oppose revivals on this ground, inasmuch as our holy religion and all its most sacred institutions are, and ever have been liable to the same abuse.

Fifthly; that *constant* revivals are possible, and that it is the duty of christians to labor and pray for them. The degree and extent of the *external excitement* will indeed vary with circumstances; but that the excitement is not the revival, and is no correct criterion by which to judge of its true character. The genuine work of grace is often most deep and pure where there is least external excitement, or after it has in a measure subsided. Hence the *revival state*, the same state of elevated, active, warm hearted piety among christians, of concern for their own souls, and the souls of others, and the work of awakening and conversion among sinners, may and ought to *continue* in the church *constantly*. God designs that this state should continue constantly, and grants the influences of the Holy Spirit *at all times* for this very purpose. The church is therefore to blame for not enjoying this state constantly. When christians are properly waked up to their duty, God will doubtless send a constant revival over the whole world, and this will usher in the day of millennial glory.

“Lord, for those days we wait—those days
Are in thy word foretold;
Fly swifter, sun and stars, and bring
This promis'd age of gold!”

What a work there is here for christians to do! Whose soul is not on fire to assist in hastening on the happy time! O how the wilderness and solitary place will rejoice, and the desert blossom as the rose, when all who profess the name of Christ, shall fully understand the design of his church upon earth, and exert all their influence and power to promote it! Then shall

“Kingdoms wide that sit in darkness,
See and bless the glorious light,
And from eastern coast to western,
Shall the morning chase the night;
And redemption,
Freely purchas'd, win the day.”

But the very important question here arises, who are the persons that are to labor for this state of things? By whose instrumentality is a state of constant and universal revival to be promoted? We shall answer this question, in part, by quotations from several other writers: “I am aware,” says Mr. Hinton, “that the work of promoting revivals in the present age, is for the most part committed to professional hands, and the care of men’s souls almost entirely left to the ministers of the gospel. There is an impression in the church, that if any one is to be active, it is only the ministers! The Lord help his ministers to be more laborious! We have (as ministers) all need to be quickened in our work, and no faithful minister wishes to shrink from it. But this cherished feeling of exemption on the part of christians at large, is a great evil; it is one of the greatest evils of the present age. It lies like a mountain on the bosom of

the church of Christ, and it oppresses the heart which would otherwise heave with far mightier throes for the salvation of the world. It stifles her voice, it paralyzes her hand, it induces a sluggishness of the general circulation, and with it a morbid want of moral sensibility, which renders it impossible to elicit even the existing signs of life, except by a system of excessive and unhealthy stimulants. Nor can any rational hope be entertained of a general revival of religion, until this vast slumbering body is roused to throw off its incubus, and bend its whole energies to the effort. Private Christians must labor to promote revivals, and they have many advantages over ministers of the gospel, even in the most favored circumstances. The one speak in virtue of their office, and often under a gaze of suspicion as to their sincerity; the other can speak from no motive but unfeigned love. The one can address their hearers but occasionally; the other may do it frequently, and follow up their instructions by almost incessant watchfulness and admonition. The one speak as comparative strangers, the other may employ the more touching eloquence of social kindness, of ardent friendship, and perhaps of fraternal or parental love. The one can speak only to those who choose to attend on their ministry; the other are scattered through society in all its paths, and can carry instruction and reproof to the heedless and the abandoned. Had there been nothing instituted, therefore, but the public preaching of the word, whether at home or abroad, the easiest, most extensive, and most effectual means of converting the

world, would have been overlooked. Superficial observers might have conceived that little result could have been expected from even a multitude of such feeble efforts as those of individual Christians in the same way as one might at first exclaim: 'Who would think of setting bounds to the sea by a sand bank?' But he who knew that grains of sand form the only effectual barrier to the raging waters, discerned too, that grains of salt would best season the corrupted world. He has indeed done well in instituting a public ministry, but the consummation of his wisdom lies in working the individual energy of his people." (See Essay on Revivals by Rev. R. Weiser.)

The truth is, that if *private christians*, the members of the church, do not labor, pray, and live for revivals, all the efforts of the most faithful and laborious ministry, will be comparatively in vain. Ministers may preach and pray, and toil and weep, until they fall victims to their exertions; but if their people sleep or refuse to come to their aid, very little can be accomplished. Revivals always begin in the church, and must be carried on by the church.

We know that many christians excuse themselves by saying, that they have *no influence*, and therefore cannot accomplish any thing. But this is a great mistake. All, even the most humble, have influence, and really do exert it for good or evil. What if *all* should say, we have no influence! Christians are declared by the Savior to be "the salt of the earth," and "the light of the world," and are commanded to let their light so shine that others may see their good

works, and glorify their Father who is in heaven." Has each grain of salt and each ray of the sun no influence? It has, and so has every Christian.

"What if the little rain should say,
So small a drop as I
Can ne'er refresh those thirsty fields—
I'll tarry in the sky!

What if a shining beam of noon
Should in its fountain stay,
Because its feeble light alone
Cannot create a day!

Doth not each rain-drop help to form
The cool refreshing shower;
And every ray of light to warm
And beautify the flower?"

Some profess to be willing to labor, but they do not know where to begin or what to do. This results entirely from a want of reflection and serious inquiry. If each one would sincerely pray, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" this excuse would never be made. We are placed in the midst of a world of sin and ruin—all around us there is one grand moral waste, with only here and there a verdant spot, warmed into life by the genial rays of the Sun of righteousness—ten thousand forms of human misery rise up before us, and imploringly beseech us to help for God's sake, and yet we do not know what to do! With us, the members of the church of Christ, is found the only remedy for these evils. Among christians alone is found "the balm of Gilead," and the Physician of souls; and it is for them instrumentally to give or withhold moral health to the world.

And some do not know what to do! Christian! you profess to believe, that Jesus Christ died to redeem a lost world—that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life”—that there is salvation in no other, for there is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved—and that the great work of publishing abroad this salvation is committed to the Church. You know that if the church neglects this duty, men must remain and perish in their sins—You know that the Savior has said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”—You know too, that hundreds and thousands daily around you, have never been “born again”—have never been made partakers of the salvation of Christ by repentance and faith—some of them are probably your nearest neighbors or even relatives; and are you yet at a loss to know where to begin or what to do for souls and for Christ? There are a hundred different ways in which you may labor to promote true piety and genuine revivals. There is the *prayer-meeting*. Go, connect yourself with it—help to conduct it, and to render it interesting and useful—encourage the hearts of others by your presence and assistance—induce all to attend it, over whom you have any influence. There is the *Sunday School*. Go, collect all the children in your town or neighborhood into it—instruct the young in the doctrines and principles of the Bible—train them up in the way they should go, and when they are old they will not depart from it. Do this, and you will

effectually promote genuine revivals. There is your Pastor's Bible-Class, or his class of Catechumens. Go, induce all the young, over whom you have an influence, to attend. It will encourage your Pastor, and it may be the very means by which a glorious revival will be brought about in your congregation. Go, distribute Tracts and circulate good Books—ask men to attend church on the Sabbath—bring as many with you to the house of God as you can—It may be *your* fault that more do not attend the preaching of your Pastor. Visit the sick, comfort the mourner, direct the inquirer, warn the careless, and endeavor to reclaim the backslider. Especially *talk* to your own family, your relatives, your neighbors, your acquaintances about the interests of their souls. Do it kindly and faithfully. Neglect no opportunity of doing good. If you know an awakened sinner, visit, instruct, pray for, and encourage him. Stand by your Pastor, and assist him in every possible way. I tell you, private christian, you have a great work to do, and you are just as inexcusable and as guilty before God for not doing it, as is the minister of the gospel who neglects his duty. O how the care of precious souls should press upon you, and rouse you to action! O how your soul should burn with anxiety to see sinners converted, the work of God revived, and the world subdued to Christ.

Do you want motives to urge you to labor for the conversion of men, and the promotion of genuine revivals? You have them in the command of the Savior, the value of souls, and the final reward of the

faithful. Remember "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." "Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his ways shall save a-soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." Dan. xii. 3, James v. 20.

Genuine revivals tend greatly to increase the *spirituality* of the church. They are the death of formality and cold indifference, and always elevate the tone of personal piety among christians. They kindle a fire in the souls of believers, which consumes their lusts and remaining sins, and makes them aspire after higher and holier attainments in the divine life. They have now tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious—have found fellowship and communion with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ—their hearts have been opened and the Savior has entered in, and now sups with them and they with him; hence they now walk by faith and not by sight, and have their conversation in heaven. They now become more *active* and *zealous* in the cause of God. They are now ready for every good work. They now not only pray daily "Thy kingdom come—thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," but they also labor that this may be accomplished. They now encourage their Pastor and each other, converse with sinners, and show that they are deeply interested in the success of the gospel at home and abroad. They also become more *liberal*. The love of God has thawed their frozen hearts, and they now feel for sinners, and

for a perishing world; and as they feel, so they will also give—not grudgingly, but cheerfully and conscientiously from love to the Savior and his cause. O what a blessed influence true revivals have upon the church! They cause her to “arise and shine; for her light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon her.” Her days of coldness and mourning are past, and God has said to her, “Awake, awake; put on thy strength O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem?” Christian, do you not wish to see this? Are you not anxious that the *spirituality*, the *activity* and *zeal*, and the *liberality* of God’s professed people should be increased? Then labor, pray, live for revivals. But revivals also increase the *number* of the pious, and thus strengthen the church. Scores and hundreds are often converted from sin and the world to a life of piety and holiness in the course of a few weeks by a single revival. And frequently many of the converts at revivals are from among those who in all human probability would never have been brought in by any other means. During a revival persons, who never attend the preaching of the gospel or use any of the means of grace, are often attracted by the novelty of the scene; they hear the word, the Spirit applies it, and they become subjects of the regenerating grace of God. This is especially true, where christians are active, and go out into “the hedges and high ways, and compel them to come in.”

Revivals give the church an important *victory* over the world. Saints are quickened and pray and labor more—sinners, often the most bold and hardened, are

humbled and brought to the Savior—backsliders are reclaimed—hypocrites and formalists are undeceived, and savingly renewed—the whole community is agitated—Satan trembles, and the kingdom of darkness falls before the onward march of the army of Emmanuel. O what a victory for the church! Heaven shouts for joy, and hell utters a heavy groan.

True revivals bring “glory to God in the highest,” promote “peace on earth, and good will to man.” They promote the extension of the Redeemer’s kingdom over the world, and hasten on the latter day glory, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the mighty deep. We believe that it will be by one great and universal revival, that Messiah will finally subdue the world to himself, and amid the bliss and hallelujahs of such a state he will reign in millennial glory.

But the results of revivals are not confined to the present world, or to the church in her militant state. They augment the happiness of heaven. For if there is joy among the angels of God over *one* sinner that repenteth, what must be the unspeakable rapture, which the simultaneous return of scores and hundreds of sinners produces! But what shall it be when all who have been converted to God in revivals shall be safely brought home to glory! O how revivals will swell the *number* of heavenly inhabitants! Millions are already in glory, and millions more are now on the way, who would never have known the Lord, but for revivals. Who then will not labor, and pray, and live for constant, pure, all powerful revivals over the

whole world ! Christian ! is not your soul fired by a contemplation of this subject ? O let us succeed in arousing you to the importance of this thrilling theme ! O that we could touch some cord in your soul which would induce you to exert every energy, employ every talent, and use every means for the promotion of revivals. You desire to see the church becoming more spiritual, active, zealous, liberal—to see her arise and shine in her beauty and glory.—You desire to see her numbers increased, her victories extended, God glorified, and the world saved ; O then labor to promote revivals ! Not only with your lips, but with your whole life and by all your actions constantly repeat the prayer, “O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known ; in wrath remember mercy !”

We cannot bring this chapter to a close, without adding an extract from the concluding lecture of Dr. Sprague on revivals. “Who can estimate,” says he, “the number that have already not only had their names written among the redeemed, but have actually entered through the gate into the city, and taken up the anthems of heaven, who but for revivals of religion would have had no part nor lot in the matter ? Limit your view, if you will, to the result of a single year, and think what a mighty accession to the heavenly hosts is furnished by one year’s revivals. And then with the promises of God and the signs of the times in your eye, let your thoughts travel down the tract of coming years, and see how much the revivals of each successive year serve to increase the population

of heaven. And finally anticipate the time when this earth shall no longer exist as a theatre for the triumphs of redemption, and the ransomed shall all be assembled on the plains of immortality ; and behold in that vast community, a multitude which no man can number, who date their change of character and destiny to revivals of religion. And then think of what has been done for these myriads of immortals. Fix upon the moment when the scene of dying was over, and the spirit was rushing forth to meet its God ; and estimate the importance of the change it has experienced, by all the horror which it henceforth avoids, and all the bliss which it henceforth attains. All this countless multitude have escaped the pollution, and degradation, and wailing of the pit, and have risen to purity, and glory, and ecstasy of heaven. The day of resurrection and judgment which, but for the renovation they have experienced, would have awakened in them nothing but shame and agony, is a signal for exultation and triumph. They walk in the light of the Lamb. They know how to use angelic harps. They are kings and priests unto God. They go on from glory to glory, constantly approaching the perfection of the Highest, while immortality endures. Whose mind is not lost in contemplating the amount of felicity which revivals will secure to their subjects through all the ages of eternity.

Pause now for a moment on the eminence to which we are brought, and so far as you can, let your eye take in at a glance the results of revivals, as they respect both worlds. Under their influence see the

cause of moral renovation advancing, until this earth every where brightens into a field of millennial beauty. Behold also the inhabitants of heaven kindling with higher raptures in view of these wonderful works of God! Not only those who have been subjects of revivals, but those who have not, not only the ransomed of the Lord, but the principalities and powers in heavenly places, and even Jehovah who is over all blessed forever, rejoice, and will rejoice, in these triumphs of redeeming grace. And this joy and glory is not only to be perpetual, but to be perpetually progressive. Say then whether such results will not justify the church even now in beginning her song of triumph? Which of the angels will think she is premature in her praises, if, when she looks abroad and sees what God has wrought for her already in her revivals, she should begin to ascribe blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb? Be this then the song of the church as she travels on here in the wilderness, while she rejoices in the smiles, and leans upon the arm, and looks forth upon the gracious triumphs of her living Head. Be this her song on the morning of the millennial day. Let the bright jubilee be ushered in by the echoing and re-echoing of this hymn of praise all round the arch of heaven. Let the church on that glorious occasion count up if she can all the revivals which have contributed to her enlargement, and brought glory to her Redeemer, and say what so well becomes her as to take this language of thanksgiving upon her lips. Let this be her song when her

enemies have all gone into confusion and taken up an eternal wailing; when she is herself glorified and enthroned on the fields of immortality, and privileged to walk in the full vision of God, when the complete triumph of redemption, shall every where be acknowledged, and shall awaken joy or agony that is to endure forever. From the most distant point in eternity which an angel's mind can reach, let the church, when she remembers these scenes of mercy through which she is now passing, still shout forth her praises in the same noble song; and let seraphim and cherubim, and the whole angelic choir of the third heavens, join to increase the melody:—"Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever. Amen!"

THE END.







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